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ALLIED SIXES AND SEVENS

If, as now seems probable, the Finns have decided to reject the generous armistice terms offered by Russia, they are making a tragic mistake. The unbroken series of Russian victories, however, is already having political repercussions in the less strong-fibred countries of South-eastern Europe. In Rumania, with refugees streaming west from Bessarabia and the Bukhovina, conditions are reported to be approaching panic; and the visit of Prince Stirbey to Ankara and Cairo is evidently an unofficial peace-feeler which may or may not have had encouragement from Marshal Antonescu. If the satellites of the Axis, including Bulgaria, now see in Russia a victorious Power from whom they must sue for terms on which to save some part of their skins, the Western Allies have cause not for complaint but for rejoicing: their armies have, so far, only one foothold on the Continent; and they will share with the U.S.S.R. the benefits which satellite defections from the Axis will convey. One danger, however, exists.

In negotiations with governments who make approaches to Moscow, the U.S.S.R., in the absence of any agreed policy between the Big Three, may quite naturally feel inclined to make her own decisions. But if unilateral action by Russia (or by the Allies) becomes the rule, the solidarity which was achieved at Teheran, and on which the future reconstruction of Europe depends, will quickly wear thin. Already an unfortunate instance of this tendency is to be found in the decision taken without inter-Allied consultation by Moscow to accord the Badoglio regime in Italy diplomatic recognition. This act was the more unexpected in that Moscow had hitherto taken the lead in attacking both the deal with Darlan and Anglo-American support for a reactionary Palace gang in Italy.

Did Badoglio jockey Moscow and London into believing that each Ally was about to score off the other by getting in first with an ambassador? Or did the Russians, whose views as to "expediency" in political warfare are frankly cynical, decide that more was to be got out of Italy in the war (not forgetting a post-war "cut" out of the Italian fleet) by working temporarily through Badoglio than by backing opposition parties for some of whom they had little sympathy? The Russians are realists. They presumably concluded from Mr. Churchill's last speech that the British and Americans had no intention of allowing the monarchy to be thrown out, against the wish of the senior navy and army officers, to please "idealists" like Sforza. We suspect that Mr. Vyshinsky has informed his Government that the Badoglio Government might be broadened to include some Christian Democrats, Socialists and Communists. If it was to be a question of infiltration or nothing, then the Communists would certainly choose infiltration. It is noteworthy that even at the Bari Conference there was little personal criticism of Badoglio himself.

The result of this development will be to shift the centre of gravity in the Opposition from Croce and Sforza—who naturally but vainly hoped to find support from the "democratic" governments in London and Washington—to the mass parties. They are not likely to be sticklers for principle if they see a chance of effective anti-Fascist action by collaborating in the Badoglio Government, especially if it gives them rather better opportunities for organisation and propaganda. From last Saturday's meeting in Naples it would seem that the Communists have already gained considerable support in the South. Meanwhile, in the North, strikes and partisan activity have spread under organised Communist leadership. We shall not be surprised if we learn eventually that Russia's unexpected diplomatic action has been motivated by the desire on the part of Italy's underground leaders to dispense, in Italy's political development, with a Kerensky half-way house.

Twilight of Von Manstein

The Russian victory in the Ukraine is being exploited with such vigour and success that the bulk of the Southern Group of German Armies appears to be menaced with catastrophe. Endeavouring to pivot his immense front on Tarnopol, where he has probably concentrated most of his remaining armoured divisions, Field-Marshal von Manstein has failed to extricate his right wing from their positions between Krivoi Rog and the lower Dniester. Advancing on Nikolaev with a speed almost miraculous under present conditions of thaw, the Russians under General Malinovsky have cut off and destroyed a large part of the German 6th Army. Farther north, where Manstein's centre had been gravely weakened by the annihilation of ten divisions of the 8th Army at Korsun, the Russians have swept south-westwards through Uman and have already left crossing of the middle Bug far behind. Thus, even if the tough resistance still being offered by the Germans in the Tarnopol–Proskvrov area succeeds temporarily in preventing Marshal Zhukov's Army Group from sweeping southwards across the Roumanian frontier to Cernauti, and thus turning both the Dniester and Pruth lines of defence from the north, it looks as if the German Armies farther south, who have still, in some sectors, nearly 200 miles to retreat to the Dniester, may be cut to pieces before they can reach the shelter of the river.

Hungarian Reaction

Much troubled about a possible Russo-Finnish peace, the ruling group in Hungary are making conciliatory gestures towards their harmless and licensed Opposition, and making use of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Kossuth to reassert their unrepentant Chauvinism. They call Kossuth "the Hungarian Washington" and recall that, for a period, he could be reasonably accused of being the spokesman of the Hungarian smaller nobility. Kossuth, who was rescued from Russian vengeance after the Counter Revolution of 1848 by Palmerston, was one of the most eloquent of revolutionaries, and in exile he had a considerable effect on British and American Liberalism. He ceased to be a Hungarian Jingo. He urged the Hungarians to associate themselves with the neighbouring small nations on the basis of equality; he drafted one of the first schemes of a democratic Danubic federation, and he would certainly have been altogether opposed to that Magyar revisionism which has long been a chief obstacle to peace in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Maybe the British political warfare team will see in the Kossuth celebration an argument against the Horthy regime. But maybe not. The B.B.C. finds it extraordinarily difficult seriously to oppose the rule of the Magyar landlord. A Swiss paper, the other day, referred to "the English historian Macartney" speaking to the

Hungarians “in broken and almost incomprehensible Hungarian,” and said that in spite of this handicap he showed how much he loved the Magyar people. But who are the Magyar people? Mr. Macartney (who has not been broadcasting for the last three months) long showed that he still had hopes of this dangerous clique of Magyar landlords. (Those who wish to learn how small a section of the Hungarian people these are should read the expert analysis of Hungary published in the series of studies of the Resistance Movements in Occupied and Satellite Europe by the Union of Democratic Control, 34 Victoria Street, S.W.) Only once did the B.B.C. refer to Count Karolyi, who, for a short time as Prime Minister after the last war, represented the more democratic Hungary. The violent reactions in the German press to this single reference to the “Red Count” showed where the true opposition to the Nazis is to be found in Hungary.

Palestine, Oil and Congress

Some complicated cross-currents of opinion have been set in motion by the simultaneous reference to Congress of two questions of the Middle East—Palestine and the Arabian Pipeline. On the Pipeline it is still uncertain how opinion will crystallise. The Administration is committed to it. Oil interests hostile to the Standard group oppose it and wield collectively some weight. Isolationists dread this military commitment in the Old World. Opponents of Imperialism are suspicious. Finally, the average man inclines to scepticism, because he is tired of hearing the too familiar tale that the oil reserves of the U.S.A. are near exhaustion. None the less, when Standard Oil, the Army and the New Deal are agreed, they constitute a formidable power.

The Army intervened in a wholly unexpected way. The tide of sympathy with the Jews, quickened by the approach of the election, had carried up to the Senate's Foreign Affairs Committee a sweeping resolution in favour of the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine. It seemed to be sure of adoption, when General Marshall stepped in to oppose it on the ground of military security. What he meant was presumably that the chances of building the Pipeline, and its subsequent safety if built, would be lessened if Arabs should be driven into hostility to the U.S.A. His action evidently reflected the activity of Nahas Pasha and the Egyptian Government, which have adopted a decidedly anti-Semitic attitude in pursuit of their ambition to create a Pan-Arab Federation. Our own reading of this matter is that the federal movement rests on a very narrow base, arouses little popular interest and stands small chance of success. The readiness, however, of influential persons in Washington to throw over a humanitarian cause for the sake of a pipeline is instructive. The matter, however, is not yet settled: the Jews, though divided, are still influential. Mr. Roosevelt, for example, is said to be opposed to the policy of the British White Paper, i.e. to a veto on any further Jewish immigration into Palestine. For that matter both Mr. Churchill and Mr. Herbert Morrison had publicly opposed it. It may, none the less, become the policy of the United Nations—meaning in this instance, Standard Oil and the Army.

Basic or Barlow?

Mr. Churchill's conduct in the matter of Basic English throws a curious sidelight on his conception of his rights as a leader. This erratic genius was himself deeply impressed by the merits of this *lingua franca*. He then referred the subject to a committee of Ministers of his own choosing. It reported favourably. Without more ado, Mr. Churchill then used his executive authority to foster the use of Basic English through a number of channels, like the B.B.C. and the British Council, which are collectively of considerable importance. Yet the report has not been published; still less have we had a discussion on the subject in Parliament. Contrast this with his conduct when much more elaborate enquiries result in reports for which he personally feels no enthusiasm. The Beveridge Report has been buried with the lively hope of resurrection as a torso. From Mr. Willink's funeral oration upon the Barlow, Scott and Uthwatt Reports, we must presume that, as far as this Cabinet is concerned, there is no intention to revive their recommendations even in an emasculated form. Basic English is a curious beginning to Mr. Churchill's programme of “Food, Work and Homes.”

The Truth About Pre-fabrication

Sir George Burt, Chairman of the Building Research Board, in an article in last Saturday's *Times*, did a good deal towards debunking ill-informed talk about pre-fabricated houses. He pointed out that in pre-war house-building, between 30 and 40 per cent. were already pre-fabricated, and that little was to be expected from attempts to apply pre-fabrication to the shell of the house, as distinct from the interior and such standard fittings as windows and doors. He also provided useful reminders that land, roads, sewers and foundations together make up nearly a quarter of the cost of the completed building, and that labour costs, including architect's fees and contracts, do not amount to more than 30 or 40 per cent. Of course, the moral is not that there is nothing to be gained from pre-fabrication. There is a great deal to be gained from it—mainly by cheaper and more highly standardised production of interior fittings which have been partly, but too expensively, pre-fabricated in the past. For the rest, the essentials are to help to keep land prices low, to apply mass-production methods to the pre-fabrication of sites, and to the construction of roads and sewers, and to get the building industry, employers and operatives, together, to go all out for a higher rate of output in ordinary house-building, in order to reduce delays between the stages and to secure more sustained and better organised work. Sir George Burt came back from the United States impressed, not by their much-talked of achievements in the pre-fabrication of complete dwellings, but by the high level of efficiency achieved on the job by an industry which has been used to being busy and not to spin out each contract for fear of not getting another.

Married Women Teachers

The ban on married women teachers is to go as the result of a promise made by Mr. Butler during the debate on the Education Bill. It has been an altogether stupid ban—not only unfair to the married teachers, but exceedingly bad for the profession. Married women make, on the whole, not worse but better teachers than spinsters; and spinsterhood dominant throughout the schools creates a most unhealthy atmosphere. Of the other questions most debated during the Bill's slow passage perhaps the most important is that of providing every secondary school with its own Board of Governors. This proposal, unanimously approved by the Planning Committee, was attacked by certain Left-wing critics who saw in it a concession to snobbery. So indeed it could be, if the new Boards of Governors were made in the image of the boards which at present officiate in connection with the “Public” schools. There is, however, a great deal to be said for boards fashioned not on this model, but so as to represent enlightened local opinion. A local education authority, with many schools under it, cannot give effective attention to the needs of each; and the teaching staffs are likely to get more freedom and self-government if there is a board to which they can appeal for consideration of the special circumstances of their particular school. But the boards, if they are to serve this purpose, must be made up of the right people, and not of dug-outs determined to make the new secondary schools as like as possible to the private “Public Schools.”

PARLIAMENT: Houses in the Air

Wednesday, 1 p.m.

“Happy Harry” will become known as “Woe-woe Willink” if he has to make many more speeches so bathetic, so profoundly unsatisfactory to the House, as that with which he inaugurated his *triduum* on Housing and Health. Perhaps foolishly (in view of last week's paltry announcement of 300,000 “permanent” houses in two post-European-war years), the House had expected an “important” debate. Such hopes soon dwindled: the Ministerial speech was the usual porridge of interim, *ad hoc*, short-term no-commitments, garnished with such technical bonbons as “foam slag poured *in situ*” and heralded by some bland personal stalling—the Minister having himself, while still a back-bencher, asked one or two pressing questions on his present subject.

Labour and Tory benches were equally restive. When the Minister said that his Town and Country Planning colleague was actually “engaged in drafting specific proposals,” there was a harsh burst of derisive laughter. Servicemen looking down from the galleries must have been confirmed in the cynicism now endemic among them. Even benign Arthur Greenwood, leading off the debate, complained that the House had been “led up the garden,” and that the Government was “fiddling about.” No one, of course, blames Willink personally in all this. He has been Minister of Health for four months only; it is a *damnosa hereditas*. Superficially, he made a pleasant enough impression. He is undoubtedly “able,” his manner was easy, his voice (though not, perhaps, quite strong enough) was mellow. He was decent, dull, and disappointing.

Civil Aviation was debated yet again, at the instance of the Tories, who see in it vast possibilities of competition, exploitation, and profit-making. To them, as Sir Alfred Beit admitted, internationalism, economic or political, is an unworkable “nostrum.” Fred Montague and Frank Bowles put the Labour case competently, with much Tory heckling.

Question-time has been brisk and hilarious this week. Eden permitted himself to be prodded into what seemed a slight dig at Moscow (*re* Badoglio ?). Granville had asked him if Moscow would be informed on the progress of the British consultations with the King of Jugoslavia. Oh, yes, said Eden, “we try to keep our Allies informed on all phases of our policy, *and I am in hope that similar treatment will be meted out to us.*”

The *New Times and Ethiopia News* lately published an apparently ill-judged article on British intentions in Ethiopia. Perhaps it was also unwise of Miss Rathbone to press Bracken in a supplementary to agree that it wasn't such a bad paper on the whole; he replied that it was “worthy of Goebbels” and “a poisonous rag.”

Lady Astor has been having one of her not infrequent periods of excitability. When Labour Members shouted that Magnay was *reading* a supplementary (a practice frowned on), she cried back, “You all read your speeches!”—a statement, which, apart from its untruth, it was felt that she was being too rapidly oblivious of the carefully prepared notes from which she had herself delivered an opportunist oration on the previous evening.

Bracken expressed regret at having to justify all his Ministry's “perambulating orators.” One of the House's rising wits, Bartle Bull, a swarthy and swashbuckling young Tory, offered Noel-Baker his next three months' clothing coupons in exchange for a return ticket from Hyde Park Corner to Enfield West. Stokes, as usual, was bellowing about (a) tanks; (b) war savings, which are in his view “absolute humbug,” Gwilym Lloyd George and the Prime Minister steered in statesmanlike fashion past some potentially nasty moments on coal. There was general approval for the Prime Minister's statement on Eire—though he avoided giving a direct answer when Bartlett asked if the other Dominions had been consulted first.

Pontifex Minor

THE NEUTRALITY OF EIRE

Has Britain's decision to respect the neutrality of Eire been broken by the measures adopted this week? We do not think so. The American Note was not an imperative demand: it was a request from an old friend, which Mr. De Valera could refuse, as he has refused it, without justifying the charge of hostility. To grant it would have been to make a sharp departure from neutrality. A State may very well eject some individual representative of a belligerent Power, who has abused his privileges; but if it evicts all the representatives of both Germany and Japan, it can hardly claim to be neutral and impartial, which is the attitude that Irishmen of all parties are agreed with solid unanimity to maintain. The other steps making, as Mr. Churchill put it, for the "isolation" of Eire, are bound to be unpleasant, but they are not intended and should not be regarded either as penalties, or as forms of pressure. They were, as we understand the facts, decided in principle some considerable time ago, and have no relation to the request made in the American Note. Even if the Free State had agreed to close the German Legation and the Japanese Consulate, they would still be necessary, since other less conspicuous agents would doubtless carry on their work of espionage. The ban on travel, with the closing of the frontier between Eire and Northern Ireland which may follow it, is a precaution demanded by the prospect of the Second Front.

There is no case whatever for the clamour for economic sanctions which has come from the less responsible faction in Ulster and from part of the American press. Least of all at this stage of the war, with victory in sight, are we going to coerce Eire. We refrained from that crudity while her neutrality exposed us to some danger. We shall not lapse into it at a time when the submarine menace is at its lowest ebb.

Two facts stand out which should determine our feeling towards this often puzzling neighbour. By common consent the Irish authorities have taken every proper and possible precaution to reduce espionage to a minimum. This they have done in a co-operative spirit and with genuine good will. Secondly, as Mr. Churchill acknowledged, her young men have served in our ranks as volunteers with all the gallantry of their race and in surprisingly large numbers. We on our side, as Mr. De Valera told the Americans, have done much to wipe out bitter memories by our scrupulous respect for this Dominion's neutrality. If we confine our actions strictly to the needs of military security, and the Irish keep their temper, our relations should not be impaired.

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Mr. Herbert Morrison's proposal to extend much further the method of "delegated" legislation is provoking a great deal of comment. It is strongly disliked by upholders of the claim of Parliament to be the sole legitimate source of legislative power, by critics of Civil Service "bureaucracy," and also by obscurantists who want to obstruct anything that is likely to hasten the pace of reform. Against this mixed bag of opponents are ranged those who, watching the slow passage of Mr. Butler's Education Bill through the House of Commons, do sums in their heads adding up the number of years it is likely to take to get even the bare minimum of essential post-war legislation on to the Statute Book by the supposedly democratic method of parliamentary discussion. Many, however, who are fully alive to the necessity of speeding up legislation are not quite happy about Mr. Morrison's proposed way of achieving this necessary object. They do not like delegated legislation in the form in which it practically leaves the Civil Service to make the laws. They realise that Parliament, as it is now constituted, cannot do the job of legislating in detail, after thorough discussion, on the host of urgent matters, many of them highly technical; but they are not aware of any workable alternative other than the handing over of the responsibility to Ministers—which means, in ninety-nine per cent. of cases handing it over to the Civil Service.

If there is no other alternative, Mr. Morrison is plainly right. Reconstruction problems cannot be left unsettled; and when the war is clearly nearing its end, we shall be compelled to pass a great mass of legislation at high speed. There is no getting away from this; and those Members of Parliament who are now pressing for an opportunity of debating every Statutory Rule or Order before it becomes law would, if they were to get their way, soon find their hands so full as to reduce their demand to sheer farce. The mass of detail (important detail, which may often involve quite large principles) that has to be got through is far too vast for full parliamentary discussion.

May there not, however, be an alternative method of delegated legislation? Despite Mr. Willink's experience this week, when he was howled at because he expressed his intention of consulting the local authorities' representatives about his housing proposals before seeking the approval of Parliament for them, the practice of prior consultation of outside groups and interests *before* legislation is brought forward in Parliament is already thoroughly established. It was used by Mr. Neville Chamberlain in preparing the local government reforms of 1929: it has been used by Mr. Butler in preparing his present Education Bill; and these are but two instances out of a great many which it would be possible to cite. Trying draft plans "on the dog" before embodying them in formal Bills has proved a most useful way of getting controversial legislation into a form in which the really debatable issues are both reduced in number and clarified in advance. No one can really wish to go back upon this handy device.

The question is whether a somewhat similar method could not fruitfully be adopted *after* a Bill has been before Parliament. Suppose Mr. Morrison is right in arguing—and we believe he is right—that major Bills must in future have a great deal of the detail taken out of them and must be confined largely to the statement of major matters of policy, leaving the administrative and other adjustments to be made in some other way, need this secondary task be left to the Minister and his Civil Service advisers? Cannot it better be entrusted to some *ad hoc* body of persons who have close knowledge of the issues either as administrators or as "victims" in, the handling of them?

The proposal could be applied in some such way as this. The Bill itself, preceded by as much outside discussion as seemed suitable in the particular case, could be kept quite short, and could be in effect a broad declaration of the policy and the main methods proposed. It could be accompanied where necessary, as now, by a financial memorandum explaining the estimated cost; and this memorandum, when approved, would actually serve as a guide to the body entrusted with filling in the details by limiting their discretion in a financial way, or at any rate causing them to go back to Parliament for authority to exceed the permitted limits. The Bill, passed in this declaratory form, could include a Part II setting up an *ad hoc* body to fill in the details; and this body could be kept in being, when necessary, for subsequent amendment of the delegated legislation adopted by it in the first instance. It could also be given power to report back to Parliament on any point on which it felt itself in need of further direct legislative authority.

There is a resemblance between this procedure and that was done in the case of Unemployment Insurance when the Statutory Committee on that subject was appointed with a mandate to propose changes in the regulations, and to report from time to time upon its doings. But what is here suggested is much wider, and contemplates *ad hoc* bodies of a somewhat different sort, composed largely of representatives of local authorities and other bodies, such as outside professional groups, closely concerned with the details of any particular piece of social legislation. For example, the proposed Housing Bill would go, under this plan, to a body consisting mainly of representatives of the local authorities which will be largely responsible for getting the houses built, with representatives from the professions of architecture and town-planning, and from the master builders and operatives' associations, with a very few men and women chosen on the ground of their personal qualities or expert knowledge of the matters under review. In effect, there would be a form of Royal Commission, not to inquire into a subject, but to take action upon it on lines prescribed by Parliament, as in the past Turnpike Commissioners, Enclosure Commissioners and other bodies of Commissioners for public purposes used to be entrusted by Parliament with the implementation of particular legislative Acts.

It would, of course, be possible for the Commissioners appointed under this system to sit with the Civil Servants concerned, to summon any witnesses they might deem it necessary for them to hear, and to conduct any local inquiries. It would be possible, if it were so desired, to include Members of Parliament among them; but the purpose, which is that of spreading the responsibility for getting legislation into the right shape among a large body of representative leaders of the groups chiefly concerned, would be defeated if they were mainly composed of parliamentarians. The object is to enable the process of subordinate legislation to be carried on simultaneously in as many different fields as may be called for by the range of problems needing immediate attention.

If this were done, the question would remain whether the acts of these subordinate *ad hoc* legislative bodies should need ratification by Parliament. It would be futile to insist that Parliament should debate their decisions in detail, that would merely bring us back to the existing impasse. What would be possible, if it were desired, would be to bring every filled-in Bill back to Parliament, not for detailed discussion or amendment, but for a "third reading" debate, at which it could be either accepted or rejected as it stood. There is something to be said against this, because it is important to keep the decisions of the *ad hoc* filling-in body open to easy amendment, and the enactment of them in a full Act of Parliament would make this difficult. It ought not to be necessary to bring every subsequent amendment back to Parliament before it could be put into effect; and therefore probably the original regulations—or whatever we decide to call them—ought not to require parliamentary ratification, save in some such way as Statutory Rules and Orders have now to "lie on the table."

It has always been Mr. Morrison's defect that he thinks naturally in terms of administrative efficiency rather than of democratic control. This is a pity; for by and large Mr. Morrison has talked much more sense about reconstruction and its problems than any other Minister. On this occasion, he put his finger right on the thing that will, unless it is put right, make havoc of all post-war plans; for nothing could well be worse than to have nearly everything held up to the last moment, and then to have to pass measure after measure in far too great a hurry for any real

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scrutiny of the provisions to be possible. Delegated legislation, as Mr. Morrison argues, there must be; but it is a necessity to reconcile this need with the claims of democracy, and not to accept, without considering the alternatives, a bureaucratic solution which is certain to be opposed, and very likely to break down in practice in face of popular disapproval.

G. D. H. Cole.

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AS THEY SEE IT IN SOUTH WALES

On Wednesday last week the *Western Mail and South Wales News*, a paper published in Cardiff, had a leader on the coal strike which was then spreading rapidly. It was headed "Strike Outrage" and in a third of a column included the following remarks: "No words can express the indignation of the whole community at this outrage, and if it were possible to fix responsibility no penalty could be too severe. It is wanton wickedness for which there is neither excuse nor extenuation. It is a gross violation of every principle for which trades unionism has ever stood. It is a blow at the heart of the nation . . . Nothing that Nazi propaganda has concocted to frustrate the Allies could do so much mischief as this dastardly attempt to hold the British people to ransom . . . men who break their pledged word, ignore the claims of common patriotism and humanity, and not content with unprecedented concessions, are resolved to extort more."

That might be called the Billingsgate approach to the South Wales coal strike, and perhaps partly explains why the miners still tend to feel themselves outcasts, fighting an unending friendless battle to keep themselves and their families alive. "I have been in mining for 20 years and never heard us called anything but hooligans," a collier said bitterly when public disapproval of the strike was mentioned.

There is another approach to the subject. It is, without justifying the strike, to try to understand why these men, who have toiled under difficult conditions for four and a half years, suddenly threw down their tools in protest against an award which made many of them shillings a week richer, not one a penny poorer. They obviously hated what they were doing and nobody, spending a few days among them as I did, could suggest—unless he were blinded by prejudice—that they acted out of greed.

It is generally realised that the Porter Award, while it introduced a very important reform in the establishment of a national minimum wage, also produced some astonishing anomalies. Most of them have since been rectified or will be the subject of early negotiation, but at the time there was no indication of that.

The anomalies were of two kinds—the skilled and experienced man was placed on the same level as the labourer and the learner, and extra rewards for special hardships disappeared.

Both struck at the very roots of the miner's self-respect. Like other skilled workers the miner holds his head high in the world because of his mastery of his craft. More than most, he prides himself on his ability to endure the dangers and discomforts of a hard life. The extra rewards he received for skill and endurance were the world's recognition of his quality.

Suddenly, and apparently without reason, they were swept away. Such skilled day workers as the repairer and fitter, even the collier, the aristocrat of the pit, if he had a bad place, were put on the same level as the "Bevin boy." The labourer with his shovel was made the equal of the man who had paid £50 for his tools.

No pride was too modest to go untouched. There are still many horses in the South Wales coalfield and in almost every pit one of the hauliers is found to have a way with horses, a special ability to understand and handle them. He is given the job of breaking in the horses for the other men as well as himself. It is not like training a horse on an open road. In the dark and narrow ways of the pit, in the glimmer of swinging lamps, a frightened horse may easily flash a hoof to the knee or grind his trainer against the rough wall. An extra allowance of a shift or half a shift's wages was paid for this work—but it was swallowed up by the minimum.

Another South Wales custom is "sharing turns." One haulier is given the job of allotting the tubs to the various ways in the numbers that will be needed. He has to do a full shift's work as well, but he undertakes this little extra responsibility and got a little extra reward for it. That, too, was swallowed by the minimum.

A man working day after day with water to his knees and dripping down his back no longer got more pay than the man in a dry place. Nor did the man breathing dust-choked air. Even the value of cheap coal allowed to men with homes was deducted from the minimum.

The miners felt themselves living in a nightmare. Traditions as old as the pits, and customs they and their fathers had fought for again and again, were swept away without apparent purpose. Blame could no longer be laid on scheming employers—they had been ready to agree to almost any arrangement so long as the Government paid. Instead of the malevolent boss, they found themselves in the grip of a possibly benevolent but obviously nothing-knowing power. "Who is this Porter?" the miners kept asking me. "Does he know anything about mining at all?"

I answered that experts had no doubt told him all he needed to know about mines, but certainly had not told him all he needed to know about miners. I thought he meant well, and that the national minimum was a great thing.

They recognised that—better than I did. They pointed out that it consolidated the special wartime payments which the employers would have found it so easy to attack after the war. Now they could only attack the national minimum, which would be a much more difficult task.

Indeed, it is possible all the anomalies would not have produced the strike if there had not already existed a widespread sense of disquiet. The Government attitude to reconstruction is particularly resented, for the South Wales miners less than anybody have reason to desire a return to pre-war conditions. They are keenly aware that the Government has failed to reconstruct the industry, and that the more prosperous concerns, and companies associated with them, are making nice profits. "If we were working for the country it would be different," more than one said to me. And to those who remonstrated with them for striking at such a critical period of the war, they replied it was up to the Government, who could settle it in a minute if they were really concerned. The miners were perfectly ready to work if they got a square deal. The argument that they were letting down the Forces had no effect at all. Thousands of them fought in the last war, and thousands of their sons and brothers and friends are fighting in this. They don't see any division between the men in the Forces and themselves.

But they do resent the fact that money seems to come so much more easily in factories than in mines: "There are girls in factories getting £8 a week for making tea, but here a skilled man can't get £5 without strings to it."

Many of them are still far from well off, and propaganda about the vital importance of coal to the nation has had an effect somewhat different from what was intended. At first, after a generation of neglect, they were inclined to look for the hidden motive—and leave it at that. It was so often repeated that they began to wonder whether there was not something in it. Now they have decided it is true, and are drawing deductions.

"The Government," a lodge official remarked, "make a lot of the fact that the mining industry was 33rd on the list for wages before the war, but has now gone up to 12th. But if it is the key industry, the number one industry, the priority industry, as they keep telling us, why don't they pay us number one wages?"

"Wanderer"

A LONDON DIARY

The issues in the Pucheu trial are numerous and complex. (1) There is an obvious advantage in warning Pétainists that continued collaboration will not be forgiven. (2) There is an equally obvious disadvantage in making an example of a collaborationist who changed his mind comparatively early and came to Africa on the invitation of Giraud. At what point does collaboration become a punishable crime? After the Armistice with Germany any Frenchman who held any office was necessarily a collaborationist in one sense and legally correct in being so. If collaboration as such is a crime, the blood bath in France will never cease. (3) Those who most need shooting are those who named Frenchmen as hostages and did similar dirty work for the German police. Pucheu was not convicted of this crime. Legal evidence for charges of this sort will usually be only obtainable after French liberation. (4) If, however, leading Pétainists are not dealt with drastically, they may form a "Franco" group, waiting to plunge France again into civil war. A wise supporter of de Gaulle and the French resistance movement will judge that there are certainly some hundreds of the worst collaborationists who will have to be treated as war criminals, but that it would be bad morals and politics to turn the hundreds into hundreds of thousands. The important thing is to concentrate on smashing all Fascist organisations and liquidating leaders who are likely to endanger the future life of the Republic. (5) The trial displayed once again the usual defects of legal procedure when applied to political cases. Many good men from Socrates to Dimitroff have been able to indict their judges from the dock. Pucheu does not come into this category and probably did not convince anybody that he was a good man. But he was able to show that the legal case against him was flimsy, and to make capital out of the fact that the Judge and the Prosecutor had both eaten Vichy's salt. I believe that the best solution for the whole problem of war criminals is to hold courts martial or speedy trials during the period of liberation (the alternative is lynch law), and to get over the period of trials and executions as expeditiously as possible.

* * *

A friend who has been doing some research on the position of the Polish Government in this country gives me the following surprising facts. Before the war, when Poland had an army of 400,000 men, the number of military attachés to different countries was twenty-one. To-day Poland has thirty-nine military attachés—one for almost every possible country, including Luxemburg. Their salaries are £85 a month *plus* expenses and the usual perquisites of diplomatic privilege (tax-free wine and cigarettes and so forth). I am told the Polish officials here are very hospitable, and entertain lavishly at the best restaurants. It is also an odd fact that a number of the younger Poles in this country, mainly officers, have recently been "seconded" from the army to take up positions in the Polish Ministry of Information and Foreign Affairs. So far, my general conclusion from the facts before me is that the ruling group of Polish families have suffered no change of heart in this war, and that they can now have little or nothing in common with the leaders of resistance in Poland, who have undergone a test during the German occupation that must have destroyed class-consciousness.

* * *

Priestley's *Desert Highway* is primarily written for soldiers, and is unfortunately only booked for a short run at the Playhouse. It has real political importance. We all knew that Priestley can put ideas over on the wireless and that he can write good plays, but for the first time, in my view, he has been quite successful in marrying his dramatic technique to an imaginative idea. His tank crew are as real, and at least as witty, specimens of the present British Army as their counterparts in *Henry IV*. But in Priestley's play the leader of the crew is a Jewish sergeant, while the corporal is a bitterly disillusioned man who denounces the madness and cruelty of war and the absurdity of fighting. The interlude, which takes us back three thousand years to a time when the Assyrian Nazis were setting up their brazen gods and ravaging the countryside gives us, through the mouth of an Israelite guide, the prophecies of Isaiah, and Amos, and Micah. Back in the similar desert hell of the twentieth century, with the choice of surrender or death by thirst, the Welshman and the old sweat, the Yorkshireman, the embittered corporal and the Jew all find, in fact, that there is after all something they do prefer to fight for. Priestley suggests that it is that essential belief in some moral principle about which the Hebrew prophet had been declaiming three thousand years ago. Priestley gets his discussion of the Jewish question just right. Out of the many explanations that have been given for the Nazis' fanatical anti-semitism he chooses what I believe to be the true explanation. It has been upheld with much learning and psychological insight. Put crudely it comes to this—that the Nazis, who set out deliberately to return to the worship of Force and to destroy the Christian concept, cannot bear the continued existence of the race who are in a peculiar sense the origin and repository of the theory that beyond power and terror there is a higher law of justice and mercy.

* * *

The *Times* last Saturday published a letter interesting to antiquarians. It was a protest against "the debasing effect" and "baleful influence" of the "modernistic art" in the exhibitions circulated by C.E.M.A. In his answer the Chairman of C.E.M.A. showed how small a proportion of its exhibitions have been devoted to modern art, but he admitted that two of its major efforts had been shows of Sickert and Wilson Steer. And the modernity of Sickert and Steer must be terrifying, I presume, to the signatories of this letter. *Who's Who* does not give the ages of three of them, but the nine others have an average age of seventy-seven, the youngest being Mr. Munnings, a mere stripling of sixty-five. One of the words they apply to the pictures of which they disapprove is "subversive." An echo of Hitler and Goebbels on *Kulturbolshevismus*? I am sure the dear old gentlemen never thought of such a thing. They were just feeling a touch over-excited. But the pother has its amusing side. On Tuesday, not Augustus John, but Mr. Munnings became President of the Royal Academy. And who can doubt that his signature to this pontifical letter earned the plaudits of his fellow R.A.s?

* * *

I repeated last week a story of a friend of mine who rang up the Hon Sec. of the South Kensington Labour Party because as an old Labour supporter she wished to join up and take part in political activities. According to her account, she was told that it was usually Communists or Common Wealthers who talked like that in wartime, and was given to understand that the political truce ought to preclude political activity. Mr. S. J. Gee, who is the Hon. Sec. of the South Kensington Labour Party, disputes the accuracy of this conversation and wants me to insert his denial that he made the statements imputed to him. We will leave it at that; no one knows exactly what they say on the phone. But the public issue is important. Need the electoral truce involve inertia on the part of local parties? It is partly because so many people feel strongly that the party is now being allowed to die of inertia during the war that so many local Labour Parties are in fact supporting independent candidates, in spite of their official orders. In fact, Labour leaders have frequently stated that party activity is perfectly proper during the electoral truce, and my friend is not alone, even in South Kensington, in wishing for an immediate campaign of a united progressive front to work for necessary change now. If we wait to organise until after the war, it will be too late.

* * *

I see that the censors are only allowing the film "Battle for the Ukraine," which deals with the Soviet summer offensive, to be shown after making forty-one cuts in it. People who have seen the uncut version tell me that while it is true that the deleted shots show Nazi atrocities, the director, Dovzhenko, had worked these into the picture in such a way as to make it a powerful indictment of Fascism. Of course, the censor's case is not only that these shots would have offended our susceptibilities, but that exhibitors find all atrocity films very bad box-office. But why, then, does this argument apply to a Russian film based on real events and not apparently to American films which, at their best, are but lurid reconstructions? Take this advertisement from a trade paper for *Behind the Rising Sun*.

> SEE captive women treated with unspeakable barbarity!
>
> SEE girls sold into gilded Geisha palaces!
>
> SEE cruel acts of war committed against even babes in arms!
>
> SEE helpless prisoners tortured until they're willing to say or do ANYTHING!
>
> SEE children driven to slave labour under the lash of hunger!
>
> AND MORE, AND MORE, AND **MORE!**

This seems a direct appeal to sadism. The Russian war-films, on the other hand, have an important political point to make.

* * *

These "Salute the Soldier" weeks offer a marvellous opportunity for any progressive movement that really means business. I could think of half a dozen suitable slogans. The simplest and most topical is "Salute the Soldier—With Decent Pay and Allowances." But there are a whole string of tags you can add on: housing, Beveridge, jobs, and all the other things the Service man wants and the Tories are so reluctant to give him. Has the Labour Party forgotten that progress depends as much on a skilful presentation of its case as it does on Parliamentary procedure?

* * *

A recent editorial in the *Daily Express* demanded the abolition of the University franchise, which is "not in keeping with our democratic ideas" because "Parliament is no place for special interests." A fine sentiment. But how odd that the *Daily Express* should manage to fill a quarter of a column with condemnation of plural voting *without once mentioning the business vote!* Presumably this far greater anomaly is to be regarded as democratic and sacrosanct, since it is based on ownership of property.

* * *

To Italy now stewing in her juice,
Tripartite Powers extend the Party truce—
No by-elections for the head of State,
Badoglio is the coupon candidate.

* * *

I ought to collect Mr. Park's weather lore into a book. This year he's pleased, so far. There has been, he says, "just enough frost to keep things back." "Yes," I said recklessly, "I hope we get the frosts over now and not in May." But Mr. Park has always a counter to such amateur optimism. "The saying goes," he replied: "As many frosts in March, there'll be in May, except what April takes away." This, I found, meant that if you have, say, twelve frosts during March (definition ?—frost showing in the morning) and eight frosts in April, then you've four more coming to you in May. Two years ago, he explained, when we had that severe frost on May 14, people said "Oh, well, it's late now, we won't get any more." But Mr. Park had counted and knew better. "There's one more to come," he said, and "sure enough there was—the worst of the lot." "You'll see," he said, "this year, too." I'm sure I shall. Mr. Park's arithmetic always works out right.

CRITIC

SATELLITIS

"Certain stars shot madly from their spheres."
—*Midsummer Night's Dream.*

The Finnish envoys brought it,
Then Hungary straightway caught it,
Next Bucharest
The plague confessed
Though Axis doctors fought it.
The Ukraine rout began it,
When Red troops overran it,
And overnight
Each satellite
Required a change of planet.

Premonitory fright is
The cause of satellitis,
The patient tells
Of fainting spells
And symptoms of St. Vitus.
The pulses madly quicken,
The victims shake and sicken,
The fever flush,
The panic rush
Proclaim the planet-stricken.

Once round the Axis wheeling,
Now off their orbit reeling,
Afraid to stop
In case they drop,
They have that sinking feeling.
They see with souls prophetic,
Survival hypothetic
As a mightier force
Deflects their course,
A body more magnetic.

The satellitic cases
Unhinged in solar spaces,
As the great Red Star
Dims the swastika,
Aspire to change their places.
Divided orientation
Afflicts the constellation,
Each asteroid
In the burning void
Forsees annihilation.

SAGITTARIUS

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to John McGuire.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

To win a bet a soldier at Hadlow, Kent, fried a pair of clean woollen socks in a public-house and ate them.—*Evening News.*

"I see President Roosevelt singing carols on Christmas Day, carefree as a boy; I see Stalin drawing wolves with a fat red pencil while he listens to the British case; but this is the picture I would like to leave with you of the Prime Minister:

"A battalion of the Coldstream was drilling before him, and as he watched the perfect rhythm of their movements his eyes filled with tears."—Report in *Daily Sketch.*

I spent 43 years in domestic service from a pantry boy to a first-class butler. It proved a great strain and resulted in a four-years' stay in hospital for a neurotic breakdown.

And I am a strong man. I lived with many titled people and big business men.

I am now in a war factory, and have a *totally* different outlook on life.—Letter in *Sunday Express.*

The first business of the day is Prayers. The Chaplain stands up, with the Speaker next to him. The Chaplain looks at the Members of Parliament, and then he prays for the country.

From a lecture on "Parliamentary procedure" by Sir Edward Campbell, Bart., M.P.

THE STILL-VEXED PACIFIC

In one theatre of war the harmony concerted at Teheran was not proof against rifts. Lately the American press has been commenting critically, and in terms which suggest active " pressure groups," on Britain's failure to co-operate adequately in operations against Japan. Admiral Mountbatten and G.H.Q., Delhi, are told bluntly that they are pulling their punches : their relations with General Stilwell, at Chungking, are said to be frigid ; the new Ledo road crawls eastward at snail's pace ; and, as for Burma, the advent in two months' time of the monsoon means that, until next winter, Mountbatten's only contribution to the war may be the limited and inconclusive hostilities on the Chindwin and in the cul-de-sac of Arakan. Worse still, between Mountbatten and McArthur there is alleged to be no collaboration at all : it is as if Delhi had never heard of the Solomons, never begun to realise that in the South-West Pacific an offensive has been launched, with which the South-East Asia Command must surely keep step.

Whatever its ulterior motives may be, a press campaign on these lines cannot be ignored. There are, no doubt, factors which need discounting. General Stilwell, fretted by his isolation in a centre of government politically on edge and militarily impotent until a supply route is established, may well have been easing his ego through the columns of Washington leader-writers. President Roosevelt's antagonists in Congress welcome any excuse, no matter how illegitimate, for an attack on the alleged subservience of the White House to Mr. Churchill. The American public is naturally inclined to contrast critically the vigorously conducted operations of McArthur and Nimitz with the strategically indecisive manœuvres of the British armies based on Assam ; and if the newspaper-reader in the United States has fallen for the story that S.E.A.C. is running a phoney war, the fault may lie in part with Mountbatten's inordinately zealous publicity machine. No greater mistake could have been made than to depict the 14th Army's recent disentanglement, however successful, from confused jungle fighting as the repulse of an intended Japanese invasion of India. When numbers on each side and geographical facts are considered, this version of the Arakan campaign was an insult to lay intelligence on both sides of the Atlantic.

Discard log-rolling ; set aside the reactions caused in the United States by too highly-coloured British " hand-outs." The question has to be faced : what are the grounds on which honest-minded American opinion bases charges of non-collaboration against Mountbatten ? It could hardly be imagined by the most prejudiced anti-English reader of the Hearst Press that pressure by Mountbatten on the Indo-Burmese frontier could result in the withdrawal of one single Japanese soldier opposing McArthur : the South-West Pacific and South-East Asia Commands are, in fact, much more separate from each other than, say, Petsamo and the Crimea.

What tenable ground, then, is there for rational argument that greater British co-operation is needed, and should be vouchsafed, in the Anglo-American effort against Japan ? Postulating an unprejudiced American approach to the facts, it is necessary to go back a little in time and to consider the situation which General McArthur's achievements have created. By July, 1943, the defensive counter-attack designed to repel the Japanese threat to Australia had achieved its objective. The battle of the Coral Sea had hamstrung the attack which Japan had been mounting against the New Hebrides ; the clearing of Guadalcanal and the eastern tip of Papua had driven in the Japanese advanced bases and thrown the enemy back defensively on New Britain. Last autumn the naval and military forces under McArthur and Nimitz passed to the offensive.

The fruits of that offensive are already in sight : under the impact of overwhelmingly powerful American air forces, followed up by landings of American marines and Australian troops, the Japanese main South Pacific base of Rabaul is clearly about to fall ; and with its fall Japan must write off 100,000 soldiers garrisoning New Britain and New Guinea. What follows ? American naval forces have occupied the Marshalls. There stands out on the map, north of New Britain, the key triangle of naval bases—Truk, Pelew, Guam (the apex)—pointing towards Yokohama 1,500 miles away. When Rabaul falls to McArthur, major decisions in the Pacific war must be taken, involving Anglo-American agreement on priorities.

With the Truk-Pelew-Guam triangle in their possession, Nimitz and McArthur could choose between several courses of action. They might threaten Japan itself with sea-air attack, and thus seek to bring the Japanese battle fleet to decisive action. Alternatively, an offensive might be directed via the Philippines on Formosa, with a view to establishing contact ultimately with Chinese forces through Amoy and Swatow and acquiring air bases in Fukien from which to attack Japan with land-based bombers. Or, again, it might be decided to proceed systematically with the gradual reconquest of the Dutch East Indies in conjunction with a British offensive against Malaya and Sumatra, thus subjecting the periphery of the Co-Prosperity Sphere to a great pincer attack. The first course, if successful, could bring the war to a swift end without calling for the use of very large land forces. Both the other courses would clearly involve the employment of immense numbers of troops, and mean a prolonged campaign, or series of campaigns.

To judge from his speech at a press conference held in Washington on March 7th, Admiral Nimitz is thinking in terms of strategy directed primarily against the Fukien coast. General McArthur, it is safe to assume, would be inclined to give high priority to liberating the Philippines. Admiral Mountbatten, according to *Time*, wants to concentrate on the recovery of Sumatra, Malaya and Siam, with a view to effecting an eventual re-entry into China via Canton. These conceptions of how the campaign should be planned do not necessarily involve a clash between British and American views : operations by British-Indian and Austral-American forces on these lines might obviously be made complementary to each other. The real difference of opinion is with " Vinegar Joe " Stilwell, who is said to oppose bitterly the " China Sea " school on the ground that Chungking cannot afford to wait while elaborate amphibious plans directed—at very long range—against Southern China mature, and that the only rapid method of relieving China's pressing necessities is to reconquer northern Burma and reopen the Burma Road.

On the respective merits of these various plans from the strictly military and naval standpoint, it is obviously impossible for the public to form judgment. In the sense that the time factor in relation to China is vital, if economic collapse and political chaos are to be averted, General Stilwell has a strong case. On the other hand, without possession of Rangoon and Lower Burma, the recovery of the Burma Road north of Mandalay would be of little value ; and re-conquest of the whole of Burma is bound, at best, to be a formidable and lengthy undertaking. It may be that Stilwell's real object is to secure higher priority for air-borne traffic from Assam to Chungking. Here he is on strong ground. If more adequate medical supplies and a moderate volume of light arms could thus be transported, it might make a real difference to the position of Chiang Kai-shek. What emerges chiefly, however, from this analysis of current reports and opinions is that reported friction between Mountbatten and Stilwell over tactics in Burma is only one facet of a much wider problem. Between Washington and London agreement must be reached in the near future as to the main lines on which a concentric offensive against Japan should be concerted, now that greater freedom of action both in the Pacific and Indian Oceans is in sight. And in that war a victory which came too late to save China from utter collapse would be a barren triumph.

QUEER TASTES

Of making many entertainments there is no end, and Messrs. Olsen and Johnson, the American comedians, seem to have a special gift for thinking out new ones. According to the New York correspondent of the *News Chronicle*, they have already " made a fortune out of revues whose special distinction was that they subjected audiences to insults and physical attacks which would have brought police intervention if they had occurred outside the theatre. Unable to understand why audiences like being pelted with missiles, having live chickens thrust into their hands, and so on, Messrs. Olsen and Johnson are, nevertheless, agreeable to continue the treatment."

In their new show they have prepared some hitherto unthought-of indignities for their masochistic audiences. " As soon as the music starts," we are told, " six seats in the third row of the stalls will sink on a special elevator to the cellar and stay there the rest of the evening."

Those of us who keep wondering what has happened to the modern world may well find here a new cause for wonder. Has masochism, once a rare affliction, become an epidemic since it was discovered by the psychologists ? In the late nineteenth century I never knew anybody who took pleasure in being insulted and assaulted. If a small boy had his arm wrenched by a bullying senior, he cried out in such a way as to suggest that he did not share the bully's pleasure. Boys who went to schools where caning was a fashionable punishment, instead of welcoming a physical attack by a schoolmaster, did their best to outwit him and thought out all sorts of ways of mitigating the pain of the strokes, such as fixing a hair from a horse's tail across the palm of the hand before entering his presence. Never did I hear a caning schoolmaster lauded as a brightener of school life. He was regarded not as a just beast, but as just a beast.

It may be argued that the rise and spread of Rugby football in the nineteenth century showed that even the Victorian schoolboy liked being violently manhandled, hurled to the ground and having his shins hacked. But there is nothing passive in the Rugby player's enjoyment. His spirit is that of the attacker. He is willing to endure knocks in the fury of the game, but he does not invite them as a luxury. He resents any roughness outside the rules, and there are times when the referee has to interfere to prevent him from showing his resentment with his fists. Similarly in the boxing-ring it is unusual to see a boxer lolling against the ropes in obvious enjoyment of the blows that his opponent is showering on his eyes, nose, chin and ribs. When a boxer climbs into the ring, he looks forward to delivering more blows than he receives. The violent threats which some of the champions utter on the eve of the contest—" I'll leave him so's his mother wouldn't reckernise him," " I'll knock his block off," " I'll eat him alive," and so forth—make it clear that the spirit of boxing is mainly aggressive. Those cauliflower ears and squash noses were not voluntarily purchased.

And it was the same with all the nineteenth century amusements. Election contests as far back as Eatanswill were glorified by a fine extravagance of insult and assault, but what participators in them enjoyed most was being the insulters and assaulters. One often heard of an enraptured audience throwing rotten eggs and other missiles at the candidate and his associates on the platform : one never heard of an audience that asked only to be allowed to sit still while the candidate and his friends pelted it with eggs and tomatoes. Even as recently as the famous meeting of British Fascists at Olympia, the members of the audience who were seized by the scruff of the neck, battered by the stewards, and hurled into the outer purlieus of Kensington, were not enthusiastic about their experiences. They complained quite loudly of their fierce treatment, and men of all parties were legitimately scandalised. I did meet one veteran Tory M.P., at the time, who made light of the violence, and who suggested that England must be going soft to make so much fuss about a few dozen—or was it a few hundred?—cracked skulls and broken noses. "In my first constituency," he said, "fights and bleeding noses at political meetings were the order of the day. We simply took them for granted. But now people have become so squeamish that the sight of a little blood horrifies them. That's a bad sign," he said. "I don't like it." Even he, however, would not have advocated a system under which audiences would remain passive while stewards bludgeoned them into insensibility. His idea of an enjoyable political meeting, I am sure, was a free fight among more or less equals.

I do not wish to commend the aggressive spirit as an essentially good thing; but I do maintain that there is more low pleasure to be got from bullying than from being bullied. I am sure Squeers enjoyed himself more than Smike. Possibly, if one had to choose, one would rather be Smike than Squeers, but the fact remains that Squeers was ecstatic in his devilry, whereas Smike was miserable in his saintliness. I doubt whether there is a single masochist to be found among all the maltreated characters in Dickens. Neither David Copperfield nor his mother enjoyed the sadistic tyranny of Mr. Murdstone. A case might be made out for regarding Mark Tapley as a masochist, since he seemed to welcome mishaps as tests of his power to remain cheerful in all circumstances. In this, however, Mark Tapley was rather like a giant inviting a pigmy to hit him and try to knock him down. If he had been a pigmy he would not, we may be certain, have enjoyed being hit by a giant, this being one of the tests of masochism. Mark Tapley stood up to fate as a challenger, and welcomed its rebuffs as mere tennis-balls to be hit back again.

Possibly someone with a greater knowledge of history than I will be able to recall some precedents for the modern taste—still confined, I hope, to a minority—for being insulted and assaulted. The first sign I can remember of the new fashion in enjoyment was at the Wembley Exhibition where one paid sixpence or a shilling to be flung out of a lift, and be sent ignominiously flying on one's back with one's legs in the air down a long wooden slope, shaped like the top of a roll-top desk. I should never have dreamed of paying for such maltreatment if I had known in advance what was about to happen to me. The show was entitled "Over the Falls," and I thought I was in for something pleasant like shooting the chute. Instead, I found myself spending money on the most surprising accident that ever happened to me till I was run down by a motor-bicycle. I have sometimes wondered since how many people who had been "over the falls" once ever paid for a second experience. Most people, I am fairly sure, entered the lift like myself in innocence, and would have had to be bribed to repeat the performance.

Some years later, however, came mud-wrestling, and the popularity of mud-wrestling, however temporary, made it clear that the love of being maltreated as a form of entertainment was spreading. In this extraordinary sport, the wrestlers wrestled in mud, covered each other with mud, and splashed their hilarious audiences with mud. "The mud," wrote an eminent journalist at the time, "flew back as far as the tenth row. It was like one of those old custard pie comedies, with the audience catching the mess. The ringside seats roared with laughter as it stuck in their hair, hit them in the eye, spattered their clothes, slid under their collars, and landed one big running freckle on the end of a girl's nose." Men and women in evening clothes paid 12s. 6d. each to be ballyclabbered in this fashion. "High light of the first round," wrote the journalist I have been quoting, "was when Jules lost his temper and hurled a lump of clay at the audience. Fortunately the woman it landed on had parked her hat with three chrysanthemums under the seat. When she lifted her face she looked as if she had come up out of the Nile." The mud, we were told, came from Norwood cemetery—which may have added a macabre enjoyment to being befouled with it.

The American comedians do not seem to have elaborated any such violent methods of attacking their audiences as this. Still I should not like to pay 12s. 6d. or more to have a live hen thrust into my arms in the middle of a theatrical performance. And I should feel resentful if my stall suddenly gave way under me and I was lowered into a cellar to be kept a prisoner till the end of the show. I might, being human, laugh if some one else—say of the figure and temper of Colonel Blimp—were lowered into the cellar; but for myself I prefer more traditional pleasures.

If the love of maltreatment as a form of fun spreads, we may yet have fashionable restaurants in which the soup is flavoured with creosote, the steak-and-kidney pudding largely composed of those "scruts" that Sir Max Beerbohm made famous in his parody of Arnold Bennett, and the apple tart contains tin-tacks instead of cloves. Coffee would be made even more undrinkable than it is at present, and much might be done to add some freakish flavours to Algerian wine. Tobacconists might mix their tobacco with explosives, and indeed every trade could do something to surprise its customers in ways that would probably greatly annoy you and me.

And so we shall all advance, each in his different way, along the road to Utopia. Utopia? How far away it seems when one reflects that men and women, free to enjoy themselves as they please, will pay for the pleasure of being insulted and assaulted, having live fowls thrust into their arms in the theatre and thrown into a cellar like sacks of coal into a coal hole!

Y. Y.

UTILITY MEDICINE

[*This communication comes to us from a general practitioner of wide experience.*]

It is high time that the disjointed and separate medical services of this country were co-ordinated into a single and efficient organisation, rendering every type of medical help easily available to everyone. The Government's White Paper on a National Medical Service is therefore most welcome as a basis for discussion, but to many who have had this matter closely at heart for a number of years it is disappointing; they see in it too timid a spirit. There is too much propitiation of the Treasury; there are vote-catching clauses to appeal to both parties; progressive readers will approve its attempt to universal inclusion, while reactionaries will applaud the fact that they, thank heaven, can keep to their private doctor and private wards. And finally there is the aim of the Government to gain a monopoly of medicine through its administration.

Discussing this document THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION puts the crux of its criticism into a single question and answer. If a National scheme and private medicine are to continue side by side will those who come under the public service expect as good medical attention as those who pay privately? Answer, that "neither the writers nor the readers of the White Paper will for one moment expect any such thing."

Criticism of this kind seems to assume that a Government service must be at a disadvantage against private enterprise. But why should this be the case? In open competition the best wins, and the best is usually the most expensive.

Surely it is not the intention of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION to support any scheme of "utility" medicine? Yet one suspects that this is what the White Paper has in mind. At any rate Government-run County Council and Emergency Medical services provide a lower standard than do the average voluntary hospital and general practitioner, and well does the public know it.

Tell a patient he has to go into hospital for illness or operation and he will say "Hospital? Doctor, you mean St. Stephen's?" naming the *voluntary* one. You explain that it's full, with a waiting list months long perhaps. "I see, Doctor, if *you* say I can't wait, send me where you can get me in; but I would have liked to have gone to St. Stephen's."

Mark the important point, this is no fault of the medical men employed. It is just that there is this fundamental question of finance in the two parallel systems of medicine that have grown up side by side: the family or "private" doctor and the voluntary hospital on the one hand: and the County Council and Emergency Medical Service on the other.

To the general practitioner and to the voluntary hospital finances must take a second place; the work must be done first, equipment bought and used, and one hopes someone will pay for it all later. On the other hand, no Government department, national or local, can be run on these lines; estimates must be submitted, passed round and approved: yet health and illness cannot wait for business methods. Each is proud of his own tradition; the great bulk of the medical profession is taught not to count the cost, whether in money, in personal health, or convenience, and is proud that the public automatically expects this, even to minor exploitation.

Doctors who have worked under the Ministry of Health and County Medical Services are only too well aware of this tendency to "bureaucracy" which is the administration of widely dispersed and different communities and sets of problems by a remote office governed by a fixed code of regulations.

The people in authority tend to be those who have actually no recent experience of everyday medical work. Also they are subordinated in the County Service to a lay committee which has complete power over their careers, and who look on faults of commission as much greater than faults of omission. Naturally any unjustified or precipitate spending of public money is a major crime. The path to success in such a service is therefore rather by gaining a reputation for negative virtues—not being interested in expensive progress, in short not blotting one's copybook by individuality or initiative—rather than by the positive ones of enthusiasm, and getting things done, and accepting responsibility. And yet it is to this type of administration that the White Paper proposes to hand over the whole medical services of the country.

It is true that in Russia the State-run medical service has been a great success. But what competition had it? A handful of doctors, mainly attached as household physicians to the great families who disappeared with the revolution. So the system had to be built up from scratch. Great as has been our Ally's achievement, the *average* medical care of an Englishman at the moment is of a much higher standard than theirs; and this high standard must be maintained.

When the NEW STATESMAN draws its distinction between the private wards of the voluntary hospitals and the ordinary wards, it shows ignorance of the psychology of the sick. Your sensitive patient accustomed to privacy will be as miserable in a noisy ward as would your gregarious Cockney in "private" and solitary confinement. Your invalid professor will turn from "meat and two veg." with as much distaste as your more voluble navvy from *crêpes suzettes*. In other words until that day arrives, which heaven forbid, when we are all turned out in one standard mould with exactly similar tastes, appropriate variety must continue to exist, especially in the treatment of illness.

Then you go on to ask: "Will all doctors treat rich old ladies who pay them well, and poor old women who directly pay them nothing exactly alike?" Of course they will, as soon as the Government makes them just sufficiently independent of financial burdens. One of the most satisfactory moments in a general practitioner's life is the time when he can deal with his cases precisely in the order of their medical need irrespective of their cash value: but the Government has, so far, deliberately postponed this Elysian situation by its conduct over National Health Insurance patients. In spite of repeated protests (verbal only, mark you), it continued the "capitation fee" per patient per annum, at nine shillings up till 1943; when it was increased by two steps up to its present rate of ten shillings and sixpence.

In order to make a living after paying his practice expenses, the doctor has either to take on more of these patients than he can attend to the very best of his professional skill, or to supplement his quarterly cheque with The New Statesman's "rich old ladies" (of both sexes). "Criticise nothing which you cannot improve." Very well, how would this writer have framed *his* White Paper? He would base it on these principles—

(1) The Government will provide a service which will compete *openly* with any other service at present in operation, and will so use its resources that it will stand out superior; so as to attract in time the vast majority of patients and doctors into its scheme.

(2) To do so, there must be thorough education of the public through the schools, press and wireless, in all matters of health, both to encourage an attitude of "positive health" to debunk fads, and superstitions, and to teach the ordinary man what he has a right to expect from an efficient medical service.

(3) Attraction of more students into the profession, by offering a good useful interesting life, free from crushing financial burden either during training or after qualification.

(4) It must be emphasised even more clearly than in the White Paper, that the causes of ill-health will be removed, and that good housing, good food, and security of employment under good conditions are to be the "priorities" after the war.

(5) The medical profession shall not be used as a "guinea-pig" in the experiment of Nationalisation, but shall only follow when banks, railways, mines and shipping have been included.

(6) The administration of the service shall be the best conceivable. The advice of the Medical Planning Commission will be largely adopted. Central, regional and local *ad hoc* committees will be set up, having complete control of all finance and administration. The committees will have representatives of doctors, Ministry of Health and local government officials. The cost will be borne by the nation, and if a contribution is required from the local rates, it will be a uniform national contribution. The doctors on the Committee will be by election for terms of not more than three years, and re-election will only be possible after a few weeks back in practice as locums. (They will then have a good opportunity of seeing how their administration works from below.)

Every man, woman and child will be included in the scheme, through a compulsory payment either through Income Tax or National Health Insurance. If he elects to use this scheme, he will register with a doctor; and doctors, consultants, and hospitals will have subsistence grants according to their needs as assessed by their local committee, plus a capitation fee, with a limit to the number on a doctor's list, and strict surveillance of the standard of service. All doctors will be required to keep up to date by regular attendance at certain local hospitals for "teaching rounds" where instruction will be given in problems of topical importance.

Doctors and hospitals should be allowed also to look after patients who do not elect to use the scheme, at first.

These are only the broadest outlines, but they should ensure that the service is at a fair advantage with those which exist already. This National Medical Service is being planned for an age when the word "utility" will conjure up memories of trousers without turnups; we must not plan a "utility" service good enough to get through the difficult times, but one we shall be glad to escape from later. This is the first of the great social reforms to come from the evils of war. Let it be worthy of its pride of place.

D. O. Barber

THE MOVIES

"The Heart of a Nation," at the Academy
"Quai des Brumes," at the Torch Theatre
"The Hard Way," at the Regal

The Academy, which has introduced to Londoners more good films than any other cinema, reopened its doors on Tuesday. The new lease begins propitiously. Duvivier's long-delayed *The Heart of a Nation*, smuggled out of Paris under the noses of the Nazis and buried near Bordeaux, dug up two years later and taken to America, where the finishing touches were added, returns almost a legend. One visits it outside the usual routine of film-going. It's not quite a masterpiece; or, rather, it makes the effect of a masterpiece which we have skimmed through without cutting the pages. Essential scenes are missing; paragraphs begin in the middle of a sentence and leave off as abruptly; this turn of farce doesn't follow from that sentimental tableau; and yet—the uncut pages are filled in by imagination—the narrative adds up to something more than a fragmentary and talented story. The theme needs no underlining: the three German invasions of France since 1870. Within a lifetime! Two of the characters of the film were children in the siege of Paris, and live to see Hitler's army marching in the Champs Elysée. The story is not especially their story, but they survive, like the family relics, the stuffed cat and the letter to uncle Jules; we remember the cat being rescued and the letter written in 1870, when the German guns were all round Paris. A handful of clues, artfully unstressed, and the triple beat of invasion, remind us how far we have come. The years between are conveyed lightly, exuberantly, sentimentally, with a touch of caricature; delicious scenes of a wedding party, a visit to the Moulin Rouge, an early adventure with a biplane. These gaieties are offset by grim episodes in the wars. Duvivier's usual method is to string a number of short stories together; here he has split up the technique into much smaller units (the equivalent of literary sketches), relying on his theme and the continuity of a family life to hold them together. The texture is admirable, the family spreads, Montmartre develops from a country hill to a crowning pleasure-quarter and yet retains its character. Perfect performances by Louis Jouvet, Suzy Prim, Raimu. Is the whole thing somehow lacking in sweep, a brilliant set of variations rather than a development? That was my feeling half-way through, modified towards the end but still adhered to. Duvivier has a rich but flawed talent. *The Heart of a Nation* is his most ambitious film, and one feels here his weakness as well as an unequalled sensitiveness and cunning.

At the little Torch Theatre, Knightsbridge, *Quai des Brumes* is revived. No need to say more about this, except that anyone who has not seen it already should take this opportunity to do so.

The Hard Way begins also with a *quai des brumes*, a woman looking down into the water and taking the last plunge; it is—yes, you have guessed—Ida Lupino. The rest of the film, running over her life as she lies dying in hospital, gives us every chance to appreciate the tense fatality and waif-like beauty of this talented actress. A skilful performance, indeed the best she has given yet; and the film itself, despite some dragging, achieves an honourable level. The opening scenes in the smoky town of Greenhill are even a little too vivid in their squalor (Hollywood is apt with beginnings), for one looks back with an occasional wistfulness in the long though not undramatic story that follows. The point of it is a woman's determination to escape from nonentity: she drives herself and her sister forward on a path of stage success that will inevitably end in calamity. The considerable merits of the film lie in Miss Lupino's performance, relentlessly alive, and in the realism which the director, Vincent Sherman, has maintained through a story of the show business that might easily have gone the way of other such stories. There are, too, pleasing touches of imagination in the photography. But the end seems long in coming.

William Whitebait

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"King Lear," at the Arts Theatre, Cambridge

Despite the depletion of the university, the Marlowe Society wonderfully persists. The names of its actors are never given, but we suspect that emeritus members have self-sacrificingly donned, so to speak, their ancient buskins, for from behind pard-like beards rang voices we seem to have heard in happier days. So good a Lear and a Gloucester we have never seen on any stage however professional, and we recall Lytton Strachey's dictum: "It is difficult not to wish that all performances of Shakespeare could resemble that of the Marlowe Society." *Lear* has often been thought unactable, chiefly because professionals naturally try—such has been their training—to make humanly "natural" characters that are abstractions incarnate. The Gloucester in this production went as far as is permissible in this direction; until his blinding he was a Polonius, indulging, perhaps too boldly, in a vaguely bucolic accent. After his blinding he rightly entered the figurative world. A remarkable performance; and the Lear rose equally to his prodigious part. He discovered in the King an inborn joviality that was new and valuable. (The play throughout was enlivened with more comic touches than we are usually allowed). Never have we heard Lear's verse spoken with more intelligence and nobility. The Edgar was highly accomplished, but we preferred the brilliant, more delicate performance of Edmund. The Regan was excellent. The Fool was played according to tradition, bent double, simian in his leaps, and mewing in a falsetto that made the words often incomprehensible. The result, as always, was embarrassing; and we wished that so evidently thoughtful a producer had invented some untraditional rendering. The opening scene showed Lear holding his court in a sort of Stonehenge, a happy notion that deserves to be pursued. Altogether this production increases the high reputation that the Marlowe Society has justly obtained.

Correspondence

THE VIRTUES OF EXAMINATION

Sir,—Dr. Joad asserts that "there is precious little of any use that any child does want to learn." It must be a very long time since Dr. Joad had anything to do with a child whose zest for knowledge had not yet been crushed by the lunatic methods of old-fashioned education. It is true, of course, that the child instinctively realises that in the old-fashioned school curriculum "there is precious little of any use."

Dr. Joad cites the multiplication table. Like most things, this is best learnt by use, not by rote. This again has been shown by experiment, not by presumption. Dr. Joad, as one might expect, even presumes the desirability of learning poetry parrot-fashion. Now, like Dr. Joad, I would like to cite personal experience. I learned by rote, while at school, a great deal of verse and prose, varying in merit from the rhymes at the end of Kennedy's Latin Grammar to most of the prayer book collects and many of the prayer book psalms. I am glad to say that, with this exception, the verse was almost entirely of a quality appropriate to a Public School. Glad, because, of the whole issue, the *last* four lines of the Kennedy jingles is the longest consecutive passage I can remember. But I remember nursery rhymes and one or two other poems picked up before I went to school, just as I remember many which I have "learnt" since, in the only sensible way, by repeated reading, without any attempt at memorising.

Again it is just nonsense to say that such jobs as drawing briefs are necessarily dull. The man who finds them so is not in the right job. One can safely guess that Mr. Brereton was not bored by the "getting up" of his "Case for Examinations": had he been he would not have "largely convinced" Dr. Joad.

The child at a school run on modern lines faces dull work when it is necessary: he does not do dull work (so far as he is forced to) for its own sake, or rather for the sake of an imbecile routine, often administered by sadists. It is true that when he leaves school he will find himself in a world stupider and crueller than his school, while, to his father, entry into much the same world was, by comparison, an escape into a humane and rational world. Consequently he is more likely to seek to improve this world than was his father.

Dr. Joad cites students who, having no examination to face, abandon his lectures midway. Dr. Joad himself pointed out, in a recent session of the Brains Trust, that, directly anything is known of a subject, it ceases to be philosophy. Dr. Joad has the difficult task of lecturing on this realm of systematised ignorance. That his students fall away midway is doubtless because he has done them the service of showing them that they are pursuing a will of the wisp: that they last so long is a tribute to his gifts.

Stephen Bylansen

THE MACHINE: IS THERE A CONTROL SWITCH?

SIR,—It was with considerable astonishment that I read in the article "Some Reflections on the Machine" by Mr. Hsaio Ch'ien that in Britain traditional respect for the individual had succeeded in applying the "control switch" to the use of machinery. One would naturally expect a Chinese to desire a control switch; indeed one effect of the on-rush of our mechanistic civilisation has been to send me to Chinese literature for relief and inspiration. But how does Mr. Hsaio square his view with Sino-British relations during the past century? Was not the forcible capture of the Treaty Ports (now happily ended) due to the hunger of British machines for markets? And is not the demand for monopoly markets the chief cause of the present world upheaval? There would be no war to-day if Britain and other Western Powers had been willing to apply a "control switch" to the machine.

The indictment of the machine is equally powerful if we consider its effects upon the individual. The latest device of mass production is the assembling line, the use of which has been greatly extended during the war and will be even more so in the fierce competition of the post-war world. The NEW STATESMAN, in May last, quoted Sir Stafford Cripps as saying that a big number of aircraft factories were running with no more than 2 per cent. of skilled men in their complement. On the assembling line intelligence is a hindrance rather than a help to production, its non-use being a cause of dissatisfaction and unrest. War enthusiasm may make such work tolerable, but in peace it is ennervating and even nauseating, and appears to call for excitement in leisure. When men derive no spiritual satisfaction from their labour, they work for money only, in the spending of which they find what little pleasure they are able to get out of life.

The technique of the assembling line involves the making of millions of uniform commodities, and so produces an environment of howling monotony and a race of robots; for men and women are just as characterful or characterless as the things they make. Distinction in things and character in men have a common source: creative labour. In the history of Industrialism the worker has been robbed of many rights and values, including skill, personal and social responsibility and social honour, while on the assembling line the disintegration of his person is completed. Fordism requires his body only, and rejects outright his mind and spirit. Where, then, is the "control switch" which Mr. Hsaio so pleasantly assumes is there?

At last Industrialism has produced a mass mind, which powerful vested interests know how to exploit, largely through the newspapers. They are able to drive the robot masses into one mania after another, to make them the slaves of any fashion, be it dress, cosmetics, film star worship, professional football and its betting pools, "tote" dog and horse gambling, etc. It is a moot point whether this control is not now sufficiently strong to defeat democracy in a crisis.

It is devoutly to be hoped that Mr. Hsaio will not encourage China to follow Britain's lead in the use of machinery, in the mistaken belief that the latter is controlled by a high regard for human personality. Unless China and India can make a saner use of machinery than Britain has done, the outlook for civilisation is black indeed.

12 Victoria Avenue, WILFRED WELLOCK
Quinton, Birmingham 32.

FILMS ACROSS THE SEA

SIR,—Is the contributor of last week's article, "Films Across the Sea" (whose name we should all like to know!), right in saying that the British public, "seems to prefer the average American film to the British"? By every standard, including the box-office, we think not. Exhibitors are enjoying an unprecedented financial boom to-day, not because they show an overwhelming proportion of American films, but for the simple reason that most of the alternative peacetime recreations are now denied to a public with more money in its pocket than ever before. It is only shortage of man-power and studio space, a large amount of which has been commandeered, that limits native production and deprives it of a larger share of the present prosperity. Surely, what the British public prefers is *good* films, irrespective of their origin. Proportionately, since 1940, it has had probably more good films from its own film-makers than from Hollywood. We do not need to apologise or make excuses for ourselves to-day. After all, it was an American writer who, comparing the respective film achievements of the two countries during the war, titled his article "So Proudly We Fail"!

Similarly, is your contributor right in stating that the American market is "definitely allergic to British films"? From early in the war and up to about a year ago, American distributors were not allowed to return their British earnings to the U.S.A. As these earnings accumulated, the Americans sought some way of turning these frozen assets into liquid cash, and, to effect this, bought the distribution rights for America of a number of British films. Now, the reception accorded the majority of these films, by press and public alike, not only disposes of your contributor's contention, but demonstrates as well, that the only persons in America "strictly allergic to British films" are those directly interested in the making and marketing of the American product. Indeed, since our Government unfroze their earnings, we do not know of one single British film allowed exhibitions in the U.S.A.

As for the suggestion that the "Oxford accent or English manner" explains our failure to get a showing in America, we can only reply "Nonsense"! The Oxford accent is as much anathema to British film makers as it is to American audiences; we don't even use it, as Hollywood does, for comedy; whilst the "English manner" has carried a score of players to Hollywood stardom.

No, our problem will not be solved by mis-stating the facts, nor shall we maintain a thriving film industry by devoting ourselves to "documentary, cultural and experimental films." As a nation, we are considerably poorer to-day than we were at the beginning of this fight against Fascism. In the post-war years we shall want exportable commodities and propaganda for our culture more than at any time in our history. The film can fulfil both functions. But will Hollywood see the sense and justice of a reciprocal arrangement with ourselves, or is the film to join oil and civil aviation as yet another obstacle to international good will? There is our problem, which your contributor, we venture to say, has evaded rather than answered.

ROY BOULTING
WALTER GREENWOOD
BERNARD MILES

THE PROBLEM OF THE FALLING BIRTH-RATE

SIR,—In his very interesting article on the falling birth-rate Dr. Geikie-Cobb appears unduly to minimise the economic factor. When he refers, for instance, to Herbert Spencer's theory about the lowering effect of competitive individualism, he fails to see that this is an economic phenomenon first and only in the second place physiological (i.e., due to a "toll on the individual's power of reproduction"). As it happens, Herbert Spencer is corroborated by the birth-rates of India and China, cited by Dr. Geikie-Cobb himself. In both countries, as he is aware, the joint-family system obtains. This takes, at any rate, part of the burden of children from the shoulders of the individual parent and places it on the family as a whole. The Russian case is analogous if not exactly the same: there the State itself is one great family. (I don't forget that the anti-abortion laws have had to be restored.)

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JONATHAN CAPE

Dr. Geikie-Cobb does well to bring out the influence of food on fertility. But there is a paradox here. Prosperity may work against fertility, and in this way. If the less affluent classes and races breed more freely, may not one reason—there are others—be their reliance on the more natural, less processed, foods which are both cheaper and more wholesome? As we rise in the social scale, we tend to become more "finicky," preferring, for instance, white to wholemeal bread. In urban areas, however, the poor offend as much as the rich. Is industrialism the enemy? On this subject of food, again, eminent agricultural scientists (e.g. Sir Albert Howard) have warned us seriously against the use of artificial fertilisers. This may have a bearing on the birth-rate: it is significant that the practice has not yet spread to India or China. The ramifications are indeed endless, even if we ignore, as Dr. Geikie-Cobb does, the spiritual side, which is by no means negligible. Is there not among us a fundamental fear of life, a deep-seated *accidie?* A comparison of the Jewish birth-rate with the Gentile may throw some light on any or all of these matters: for one thing, alcoholism is less prevalent among Jews. Within its limits, however, Dr. Geikie-Cobb's article is so good that it would be ungrateful to pick any more holes in it.

A. D. COHEN

JAPANESE QUISLINGS?

SIR,—M. van Blankenstein's argument is not unfamiliar, and it deserves attention, since its implications go well beyond Java and the activities of anti-Dutch Indonesian politicians. A principle is involved which concerns everyone among the United Nations. The writer feels that these men must not be put on the same level as Mussert and Quisling, and he refuses to regard them as traitors. Nowhere in my article is it said that they should be so regarded; on the contrary I emphasised that "the term of quisling as we know it in Europe must be applied with caution and qualification to conditions in the Far East." On the other hand, the writer himself advances a whole series of arguments against Soekarno's political integrity, calling him an "unstable politician," an "opportunist," "enticed by the political promises of the Japanese," and "a man who is doing a disservice to the interests of his people." This is difficult terrain indeed. The qualities cited are those usually attributed if not to traitors, to what are commonly called "collaborationists." My article was not so much concerned with whether Soekarno and his friends are doing a disservice to their own people (they may disagree on this point with M. van Blankenstein), but whether they are actively assisting the enemy of the United Nations. This they undoubtedly do, by helping the Japanese to recruit Indonesians for the "Java Defence Corps," by enforcing Japanese regulations, by spreading Japanese propaganda. Nevertheless, continues the writer, to judge whether a man is or is not a quisling should be left to the members of his own nationality. Soekarno, to complete his story, was elected chairman of the Java Central Council set up by the Japanese Military Administration on October 17th, 1943, and the following November visited Tokyo, where he was granted an audience of the Emperor. His party, "Poetera," on the other hand, was dissolved by the Japanese in January 1944 because of its interminable squabbles with other collaborationist associations, and all have now been merged into a fully Japanese-controlled "National Service Organisation" with the object of "enabling all races in Java to participate more effectively in the war effort." (Domei, 13.1.1944.) I venture to suggest that other members of the United Nations besides native Javanese and Dutchmen are entitled to form an opinion on these activities since it will fall mainly to them to throw the Japanese out. Finally, in my article I gave Hadji Mansur the benefit of the doubt. This eminent and influential leader of the "Java Muslim League" has since disappointed me. In a recent interview he declared that "what attaches us more than anything to Japan is the latter's spirit of Bushido, for the spirit of absolute sacrifice to Allah may be called the offspring of Japan's spirit of Bushido or absolute sacrifice to the Imperial Throne. Japan's policy of *hakko ichiu* is in full accord with Muslim teachings." As an example of the effects of Japanese religious propaganda in the occupied territories this is as remarkable as it is disturbing, for Mansur is a man of great learning who surely knows what he is talking about. No one, not even a Japanese reporter, could compel him to make so nonsensical and dangerous a statement. Evidently, whatever we choose to call these men—and I agree that we must pass no hasty judgments—their position is, to say the least, not altogether unequivocal.

PETER DE MENDELSSOHN

THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

SIR,—But for illness I would have replied to Mr. Freeman before.

The main traditional Christian view, shared by Roman, Anglican, Orthodox and Noncomformist Evangelical, is surely that man's will was weakened by the "Fall" but not destroyed. This is Christian teaching, but it would have no meaning apart from the doctrine that the will is in some sense free. But it does not mean, as Pelagius thought, that man's will is sufficiently free and powerful to accomplish, unaided, his salvation. Freedom of the will is without question a vital element in the Christian morphology of man. St. Paul never denied free will and St. Augustine cannot be adduced unless it is remembered that his writings on this theme were directed *against* Pelagius. When he writes about turning from the higher to the lower, he is writing of human acts of choice and can be understood in no other sense than that of the assumption of human freedom. If Mr. Freeman reads the Articles in question, he will see that they most carefully avoid saying the very things he says they do say. They are typical products of the period in which they were composed: attempts to provide a formula which would offend neither the Catholic nor the Calvinist element of the day—and the Calvinist elements have been long dead.

The Catholic tradition is clear on the point. What some Dominican doctors said at the Council of Trent is not so important as what the Council of Trent said. Catholic theology is absolutely committed to the doctrine of freedom, and the Evangelicals were followers of Arminius and against Calvin on this very point. Predestinarian Calvinism has been well summed up by Niebuhr as follows:—"In their (the Calvinists') theology man is not so much condemned because he is a sinner as because he is man." As for the official Roman Church, it accepts the Thomistic position, which is fundamentally based on the freedom of the will. This freedom is besides the keynote of the Gospels and in our own times found a new interpretation in Dostoevsky's Legend of the Grand Inquisitor.

H. J. MASSINGHAM

HAMLET

SIR,—I disagree with Sybil Morrison's views on the quotation "Oh, I die, Horatio." She suggests that there is no doubt that Hamlet wishes to die. Surely one of the fundamental points of the play is Hamlet's uncertainty about death. If he had felt convinced that death was preferable to life, would he not have taken his own life "with a bare bodkin"? It seems likely that when he realised he was at last dying his earlier doubts came foremost to his mind.

> . . . But that the dread of something after death,
> The undiscovered country from whose bourne
> No traveller returns, puzzles the will
> And makes us rather bear those ills we have
> Than fly to others that we know not of?

His last words "The rest is silence" emphasise with a terrible poignancy that even at death his uncertainty remains.

HAZEL B. POLLARD

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

When at a dinner party talk advances into the night and the hands of the clock unwatched by the guests spin round; when one moment one is discussing whether the best novels are those least like life and the next whether the pursuit of truth is compatible with the pursuit of beauty; when the din becomes deafening and the whole room rocks with disputation—when the single revelation of the evening has been the utter inability of one human being to understand the other, then is the time to retire and consider whether this is innate in man's nature or whether it has been engendered merely by the conflict of minds disordered with drink.

A study of past controversies, in which sober adversaries spray page after page with ink in an endeavour to inject reason into their opponents' intellects, supports the former view. Two encounters of the early Sixties, between Matthew Arnold and Francis Newman and between Charles Kingsley and John Henry Newman, are a melancholy recordation of the inviolability of the human mind. In 1861 Matthew Arnold delivered three lectures at Oxford entitled *On Translating Homer*. He sought to show how Chapman, Cowper, Pope and, in particular, a recent translator, Francis Newman, failed to reproduce the spirit of Homer. Homer's style, Newman averred, was quaint, garrulous, prosaic, low.

> Search the English language for a word which does not apply to Homer and you could not fix on a better than *quaint*, unless perhaps you fixed on the other three.

In Arnold's opinion Homer is the exact opposite. He is rapid, direct in word, in style and in his ideas; and above all he is noble. Anything odd or quaint must be shunned: better to write "Castor" and "Lacedæmon" than "Kastor" and "Lakedaimon" however much critics might urge us to bear with the rewritten Greek names in the hopes that they would by this means become natural to the next generation. "For my part," says Arnold, "I feel no disposition to pass all my life in the wilderness of pedantry, in order that a posterity which I shall never see shall one day enter an orthographical Canaan." Above all, Homer writes in the grand style. Difficult as this may be of definition, Arnold hit on a simple method: he quoted passages of Newman's translation and showed how remote they were from the grand style.

Francis, the brother of the Cardinal, was a remarkable and erratic creature. His youth passed in violent oscillations of religious belief. A double first, he resigned his fellowship at Balliol because he could not subscribe to the Articles and declined to take orders. Then the spirit of evangelism smote him. He departed with young Lord Congleton, a Dr. Cronin, and Cronin's mother and daughter to join a well-known Devonshire dentist at Baghdad in missionary work. Dr. Cronin was travelling with the dentist's infant son in his arms, Newman with a lithographic press for printing tracts. Disasters abounded; the two women, exhausted by the appalling journey, gave up the ghost; the Moslems remained obdurate. Newman returned to England, with growing doubts, it was rumoured, about the Trinity. But no; he materialised in Bristol, was immediately re-baptised and nearly joined the Plymouth Brethren. It was at this time that his brother, John Henry, on hearing that Frank sometimes addressed small private religious meetings, felt bound to cut the connection with one who, unabashed, usurped priestly functions. Soon the inevitable occurred. Frank's religious approach, though partly mystical, was cold and dialectical—his mother had called him "a piece of adamant." He indulged in higher criticism of the Bible, renounced Christ's divinity and criticised His morality. He adopted Theism and in this astringent creed he remained until the year of his death at the age of ninety-two, when we are assured he was reconverted to Anglicanism; but it was an Anglicanism with no very lively hopes of a second life.

It should not be supposed, however, that theology alone occupied his hours. He wrote on philosophy, philology, morals, political economy, politics and diet. His tireless, extraverted, divagating mind was always leading him to new fields of inquiry. Now he was urging Vukovich, a Hungarian ex-Minister of Justice, to introduce the Bactrian camel into his country for which, he declared, it was particularly suited. The bewildered foreigner heard him out, but "Herr V. *looked* very much as if he had never heard of the Bactrian camel." Now he was applauding Charles Trevelyan for trying to introduce the English alphabet into Indian languages. At a distance of eighty years figures like Newman appear improbably grotesque; yet nearly all of us know similar characters, men whose enthusiasms seed like convolvulus and run wild over the garden of human endeavour, whom we find studying conchology one week and lecturing us on Hannibal's campaigns the next. Such was Francis Newman. He would lecture on anything, it might be on the scientific way of building a fire and lighting it from the top. Or it might be on other equally pressing problems. "Indeed," wrote one lady, "it is upon a lesson of his on rural sanitation that I have based my own management of those matters in our own country home." He had views on everything; he urged after the Phoenix Park murders that Gladstone should appoint an Irishman to the Irish Secretaryship: Mr. Shaw he thought was a likely man. He was "anti-everything"—except flogging. He was a vegetarian or, in his own words, an anti-creophagite. He was anti-tobacco and anti-alcohol. He rejoiced that "the recent celebrated cricketer, a Mr. Grace, it is said, will not even take *tea* but prefers water." "I am ever in experiment on something. At present it is on cacao butter and vegetable oils. We esteem the cacao butter for *savoury dishes* very highly but . . .,"—and an exultant gleam lit the vegetarian eye—". . . it is too hard to spread on cold meat." He went in for Kossuth and cuneiform script. And now he went in for translating Homer.

Newman was no novice at translation. He had translated *Hiawatha* into Latin and *Robinson Crusoe* into Arabic. His translation of Homer was, as one might expect, governed by a philological theory: Homer's dialect and diction differ so much from Sophocles' that Homer must have seemed antiquated to Sophocles as obscure as Chaucer sounds to us. Therefore one should translate Homer into quaint and antiquated English. He accordingly snowed his text with such words as *mon, londis, libbard, muchel: bragley* meaning "proudly fine"; *plump* "a mass" and *bulkin* "a calf." He also chose a metre which had the disquieting effect for American readers of being identical with that of *Yankee Doodle*—

> Oh, brother, thou of me who am a mischief-
>   making vixen,
> A numbing horror.

The creator of such lines was unlikely to comprehend a single phrase of his sardonic, well-balanced critic. In his reply to Arnold, he expanded his thesis with a multitude of learned examples. "It is quaint," he argued, citing one of the noblest passages in the Iliad, where Sarpedon exhorts Glaucus before battle, "to address a young man as 'Oh pippin!' or 'oh softheart!' or 'oh pet!' whichever is the true translation of ὦ πέπον." Arnold replied; and in his most elegant and ironic style, languidly flicked the last strips of skin from Newman's raw flanks. Learned as might be the victim's argument it was irrelevant, for who could know how Homer sounded to Sophocles? Scholars like Newman, intent on the literal value of Greek, often came to believe that a literal rendering was the best translation. In fact they were false even to the literal, as when Newman bowdlerised the Greek for "bitch" into "vixen." It was not that Newman did not give us full change for the Greek but he gave it in copper when we wanted it in gold. Scholarship in his hands was a positive handicap:

> To handle these matters properly there is needed a poise so perfect that the least overweight in any direction tends to destroy the balance. Temper destroys it, a crotchet destroys it, even erudition may destroy it. To press to the sense of the thing itself with which one is dealing, not to go off on some collateral issue about the thing, is the hardest matter in the world. The "thing itself" with which one is here dealing, the critical perception of poetic truth, is of all things the most volatile, elusive and evanescent; and by even pressing too impetuously after it, one runs the risk of losing it.

So the argument progressed . . . and it is a living issue. Of two of the most recent translators of Homer one is, in the main, an Arnoldian, the other a Newmaniser. T. E. Lawrence's introduction to his translation of the Odyssey contains some extraordinary statements. It is written, he says, in Wardour Street Greek. "In this tale every big situation is burked and the writing is soft. . . . The author misses his every chance of greatness as must all his faithful translators." His translation, however, conforms in the main to Arnold's dicta. The noble passages are translated with dignified simplicity. Mr. W. H. D. Rouse, too, prides himself on his translations of the Greek into plain English; in other respects he Newmanises. The mark of excessive erudition is upon him; he knows Sanscrit and Zend-Avesta, he is a man of many theories. His translation is prosaic, low. Eurycleia speaks in country dialect; and when he writes "Phoibos Apollo called out . . . Oh Ares! Ares! you mensbane, you bloodthirsty fort-stormer," we are reminded not of plain English, but of Newman's "Chestnut! why bodest death to me?"

Nevertheless at the time Arnold's triumph seemed complete. But just as Newman had been unable to close with Arnold's argument, so Arnold in his disdainful sampling of his adversary's pabulum overlooked a highly relevant criticism. Arnold had stressed that the metre best fitted for a translation of Homer was the hexameter. Newman posed a simple syllogism; if Homer was popular and English hexameters, for whatever reason, were not, hexameters were not the metre for a translation of Homer. Arnold often suffered from a mental cataract. It was as if his intellect was not strong enough to support that active intelligence and sensibility. But seldom, even when writing about religion, was his blindness more evident. Bewitched by the sound of his own irony, his delicate ear failed to appreciate that a language as rich in consonants and short syllables as English depends on accent and will not endure the bondage of so rigid a line as the hexameter which depends on quantity.

Arnold's lectures, however, in their penetration and good sense remain a classic in literary criticism. In them he expounded one of his favourite themes: that as the genius of English poetry lies in leaping metaphors, in fantastic, extravagant imagery, the English do not sufficiently appreciate the noble simplicity of the grand style. His own poetry was a protest against the English tradition. But, on the issues of the controversy, Arnold was under no illusions:

> On the mind of an adversary one never makes the faintest impression. . . . How vain to rise up early or to take rest late, from any zeal of proving to Mr. Newman that he must not in translating Homer, say *houndis* or *dancen*. . . . Such men, however, provide for an opponent's vivacity the charming excuse offered by Rivarol for his, when he was reproached with giving offence by it: "Ah!" he exclaimed, "no one considers how much pain every man of taste has had to *suffer* before he ever inflicts any."

Not the faintest impression, one murmurs, as the guests at the dinner party sail into action against each other with all their turrets firing, not the faintest impression. . . . NOEL ANNAN

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THE RELIGION OF SOCIALISM

Faith, Reason and Civilisation. By HAROLD J. LASKI. *Gollancz.* 6*s.*

In the nineteenth century the various revolts against the drab world of slums and factories become comprehensively known as Socialism. This included the moral and aesthetic revolt of the Christian Socialists and William Morris, the "scientific" revolt of Marx and the common-sense attack of Sidney Webb. Libertarians denounced wage slavery, while Christians and artists inveighed against the degradation of values involved in a system based on the search for profit. These various points of view were all for the time complementary to the main argument that Capitalism must crash because of its own internal contradictions and because of its incapacity to satisfy the needs of the common man.

In the eyes of Forsytes and Blimps, all Anarchists, Socialists and Bohemians were naturally lumped together as revolutionaries. To-day the alliance has broken down. Soviet Russia has provided concrete proof that Socialism can be an efficient system, and that it may solve the psychological and economic problems of unemployment and discontent which have baffled the capitalist economists. There can no longer be any serious dispute that want, unemployment, the frustration of scientific achievement, the waste of the good things of life so characteristic of the years between the two wars, can be ended by some form or other of Socialist planning. But the artist and the moralist cannot be satisfied by any technical success, while those political philosophers who are also Socialists have increasingly found themselves maintaining an uneasy balance between their intellectual conviction that Socialism is a necessary and desirable framework for society and their doubts whether so great a social change can be carried through without wars and revolutions which will put in jeopardy the liberty in whose name the change will be carried out. In book after book Professor Laski has been honest enough to admit this inner conflict. Reduced to its simplest form, his argument has been that the Marxian analysis is broadly correct, that we must move on to a Socialist economy if we are to solve our problems, but that this can be done without irreparable damage to liberty provided the ruling class will give way without resorting to war or Fascism. Then by way of conclusion Mr. Laski has to add that no ruling class has so far shown any sign of being willing to do anything so sensible.

In his latest book Mr. Laski puts aside this dilemma and argues that after this war the influence and prestige of the Soviet Union will give to Socialist faith an impetus that will in effect amount to a religious revival. Delving into Roman history, Mr. Laski draws an analogy between the emergence of Christianity during the decadence of Rome and the growth of the religion of Socialism within the structure of decaying Capitalism. His thesis is sustained with his accustomed eloquence and vitality. His writing is unequal; there are passages where the eloquence comes dangerously near to rhetoric. But he has written nothing more challenging than the chapter on "The Source of the New Values" in which he discusses some of the intellectual leaders of the present day, and urges that they have failed their generation because of their inability to face the implications of the failure of Capitalism and the alternative of Socialism.

When Mr. Laski makes this charge against many British economists, he is wholly justified. What can they say in self-defence when they are accused of writing an endless series of abstract books to deny the possibility of Socialist planning without making any effort to study the actual planning of the U.S.S.R.? His thesis can also be well sustained against many political theorists. He makes, too, many penetrating remarks about traditionalists like T. S. Eliot. But in one fundamental respect I think he misses the point. The religion which has given energy and vitality to the last three capitalistic centuries has not in fact been Christianity. Christianity has had to compromise with the almost universally accepted religion of Progress, which has assumed the "perfectibility of man" as its basis and science as its instrument. When T. S. Eliot looks back with ineffective yearning to seventeenth-century divines or Aldous Huxley denounces the confusion of ends and means, they are not merely seeking to escape current problems, but posing what is to them the fundamental question of how in an industrial age, whether capitalist or Socialist, man can regain the values which used to be enshrined in the Christian faith. Mr. Laski holds that the end of the profit and class system will enable men again to believe in themselves and their society and to find in the knowledge that the advance to a saner society of social equality is within their own power to achieve, a religion of humanism which will make it unnecessary to believe in the supernatural or to seek direct relations between man and God.

Personally I agree that it is useless to attempt to reimpose a belief in a theology which no longer agrees with knowledge. But I do not think that he answers the questions put by some of the writers he criticises. It should be possible for us to find for a time a dynamic and excitement in the rebuilding of our society, and I hope it is true that the mass of mankind will eventually be inspired by the religion of humanism. But it is not an answer to those who believe that man's discontent arises from accepting the religion of material progress to tell them that they will find inspiration in applying the principles of Socialism to the industrial West. By giving men liberty and equality we provide the social basis on which a good life becomes more possible; we do not at all assure it.

I expect Mr. Laski will agree with me about this. But the criticism should be made, because to-day many of those who are quite prepared for social change and who can be persuaded that we in the West must also have a planned Socialist economy and a system of Federated Nations, are put off by the failure of modern Socialists to meet their criticism that no change in social mechanism guarantees the moral change that Socialism desires to achieve. But in this book Mr. Laski has advanced our social thinking and put with an eloquence few of his contemporaries can equal, the need for a revival of Socialism as a faith as well as a programme.

KINGSLEY MARTIN

THE MOUNTAIN RANGES

The Eleven Religions and Their Proverbial Lore. A Comparative Study by SELWYN GURNEY CHAMPION. *Routledge.* 18*s.*

Time-travel offers the quickest ways of getting about in wartime. On, as far as you like, into the next phase, peace (have those speeches typed out!), war, the war to end wars, barbarism, Utopia: my own travel in that direction, I am sorry to say, often takes misty or sardonic turns, but then I haven't yet a Plan ready. Slipping back is both easier and, dispite Mr. Dunne, more solid; the stations are marked, guide-books tell us what to expect, where to go. There's the Cromwell country, for example, remarkably untouched once you are off the beaten track. Or Rome with Gibbon—a longish stay this; take foot-warmer and snuff-box and brush up your Latin. Week-ends at Ferney and Twickenham. Everyone has his favourite line, with a century, a house or a wiseacre set at the end of it. But easiest of all—and most flattering to the tripper—is the conducted tour flashing past centuries and continents and landing you safe at the point you started from. Such a window-seat, comfortable in these times, is provided by Dr. Champion. The lazy and eager will find here panoramas, ranges, cloud kingdoms, brought together in a remarkable way.

Dr. Champion, the compiler of *Racial Proverbs*, a massive and entertaining volume, has assembled in little more than three hundred pages the teaching and lore of the eleven surviving major religions of the world. These are Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hebraism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism; their adherents to-day range in number from the 520 millions of Buddhists to Zoroaster's modest 125,000. The sub-title of the book is "A Comparative Study"; and a more sapient reviewer might go on to draw the comparisons and conclusions for which such an anthology provides material. That (for example) all religions have come from Asia and are retreating to strongholds there; that in essence they inculcate the same virtues, often in the same words; that their inspiration drives men towards either activity (Christianity and Shinto) or passivity (Hinduism, Taoism); that there is no religion, except possibly Zoroastrianism, which does not exalt poverty and teach that God will provide for the morrow . . . Platitudes of this nature will come to the assistance of every reader of *The Eleven Religions*: one merit of the book—which by the way is clearly and beautifully arranged—is that it encourages us to sweeping generalisations, while adding precious detail to our own small pile of knowledge.

There they are, then, in the distance, the mountain ranges, one so very much like another, as we glance up from the foothills. Christianity, no doubt, for many will have a special illumination which brings it nearer, but how will the same divine paradoxes strike in language less hallowed and poetic? The appeal of Buddhism to "a reality called suchness—nothing can be said of it except that it is so or such" will seem a little empty to Christians. So, too, will the mystery of the Trinity to a Buddhist. In fact, unless one "accepts" a particular religion, its theology must appear quite unreal and inexplicable. What is the Word, the Tao? No one knows except the believer, and he cannot say.

Nevertheless religions provide also a philosophy, a consolation; some are more radiant than others, some more extreme, some more reasonable. One doesn't imagine Confucians torturing one another for centuries over questions of doctrine; a Hindu Joan of Arc is unlikely; "better marry than burn" was uttered by a Pauline rather than a Christian. We can mark distinctions. But perhaps the chief paradox common to all religions is that while teaching love they breed also hatred: there are glimpses of this in Dr. Champion's volume, and even more noticeable is the whittling-down of high precepts. (To demonstrate this is, of course, one of the book's aims.) The very poor are told again and again that they are blessed, and with some misgivings they acquiesce:

> The nest of the blind bird is made by God. (*Kurdish and Turkish Proverb.*)

The more prosperous farmer has an eye for business:

> It is good to lend to God and to the soil—they pay good interest.

This saying is recorded among both Danish and Hindi proverbs. And from hard-headed business to a cynical scepticism is only a short step. "God gives nuts to those that have no teeth" is recorded as coming from Portugal, Montenegro, England, Spain; and in one form or another it pops up everywhere. God, in this case, is not so much the original God of altar and ikon as a secondary, more malicious God ("the Gods," even, or Providence) who can be blamed for misfortune. An important and sometimes amusing element in Dr. Champion's collection is provided by the intervention of this sub-deity or troll.

Apart from its value as a comparative study, *The Eleven Religions* is a delightful anthology to pick and choose from. I have noted down a number of sayings, usually for their poetic, humorous or national character. Here are a few:

> A fat man has no religion. (*Kashmiri proverb.*)
>
> Of two bedfellows who hear the cock crowing, the one who gets up first will enter paradise. (*The Vendidad.*)
>
> God is not sinless, he created the world (*Bulgaria.*)
>
> God listens to short prayers. (*Italian.*)
>
> Fear life, but do not fear death. (*Russian.*)

One does not know to what saint one should pray. (*Russian.*)

No sin—no salvation. (*Ukraine.*)

Act as if you were watching over an infant. (*The Great Learning.*)

God curses haste. (*Irish.*)

God did not tell everything to his mother. (*Irish.*)

That is only one flavour—and a not very important one—to be extracted from these 5,000 proverbs. Other readers may find themselves studying and enjoying a quite different book. Two points occurred to me while reading it, which I have not been able to answer. (1) The time-lag of such a collection is obviously considerable, but how many of the sayings given as popular proverbs are still current? Among the English I did not encounter more than half a dozen that were familiar. (2) "God is better pleased with adverbs than with nouns." This baffled me when I first met it as an English proverb on page 51, and again as Arabic. Verbs possibly, but *adverbs?* What sort of style, one wonders, in heavenly circles . . . ?

G. W. Stonier

PEACE WITH TRADE

History of Anglo-Soviet Relations. By W. P. and Zelda K. Coates. *Lawrence & Wishart and Pilot Press.* 18*s.*

The "Jesus Christ Safety Matches," shipped to England in "foreign-made coffins," were, according to the *Morning Post* (October 26, 1932), the "Soviet's latest infamy." On the box, it was alleged, a blasphemous representation of Christ stood as a trade-mark. The *Sunday Chronicle*, the *Daily Mirror* and Mr. A. Denville, M.P., joined in a front-page howl against the "poison gas from Moscow." A month later, they muttered in small type the admission that the matches were not Russian at all; that they had, in fact, been made in Southern India at the pious request of some Indian Christians who wanted to keep the image of God's Son constantly before them.

If, in the early chapters of the Coateses' history, there are many such grotesque stories, it is because they describe normal Anglo-Soviet relations in the 1920's and the early 1930's. Year after year, the *Daily Mail* and *Morning Post* rubbed their irritants into healing animosities. Newspapers found ticks in Soviet butter and slaves in Soviet timber-camps; they uncovered Red letters and guarded the public from Red oil, while Conservative Governments treated Soviet delegates like criminals on parole. It is an excellence of the Coateses' history that its sources, other than those in official documents, are chiefly contained in their unique file of newspaper clippings, and in *Hansard*. These describe better than any other witness the atmosphere of the time, when Rothermere and his furious claque in Parliament and the clubs tried to determine Britain's reception of Russia's overtures; when the T.U.C. was willing to use its industrial power for political purposes; when the *Daily Herald*, which once called a traducer of Russia a liar and challenged him to sue for libel, was a fighting Socialist sheet; and when the British working-class, fired by a revolutionary idea, thwarted the plan for war against Russia. The Coateses have served the future of Anglo-Soviet relations by reconstructing from the contemporary Press and debates a monitory past.

Were Russia's enemies really afraid that an atheistic, immoral gospel, after its work was complete at home, would corrupt Britain? The old ladies who packed the Albert Hall to protest at religious persecution in Russia or to hear an "escaped slave" tell his experiences may not have noticed that the moral fervour of anti-Communism usually corresponded with a spurt of activity by the shareholders of the Lena Goldfields Concession or other creditors of pre-War Russia, or of sympathisers, suddenly afraid that the Communist attack on dividends might extend to Britain. The anti-Russians had a material, not a moral goal. They intended to collect their debts by force, and by force to decide their future relations with their debtors. The years 1923, 1926, 1933 and even 1940 were critical for peace because they corresponded with a period of weakness among those in Britain who had no debts to claim from Russia nor reason to fear her example. Till 1941, two Englands had relations with Russia—the England of Baldwin and Chamberlain, and the England of, perhaps, six million organised workers—the first favouring a "defensive" and acquisitive alliance against Russia, the second fearing a war which they would lose whatever the military result. As the Coateses' vivid serial unfolds itself, we see the curve of war rise as the curve of working-class strength declines.

Fortunate, though curious, allies of Russia's friends were the business men who found the Soviet Union a reliable and important customer. To which England did they belong? Prospectively, to the England of Churchill, 1941 and the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, 1942. They didn't love Communism, but they thought the Soviet Union useful. Mr. Chamberlain said on December 2, 1931 . . . "Has it struck you that one of the most extraordinary and interesting experiments ever undertaken for the betterment of mankind is going on to-day in Russia and bears every indication of being ultimately crowned with success?" On December 5, 1934, he said . . . "I should say that to-day money could be lent to Russia with greater security and greater ensuing benefit than to any other country in Europe."

Not Neville, but Arthur Chamberlain, Chairman of Tube Investments, Ltd., spoke these words which the Coateses reproduce. The Birmingham business man who had dealings with Russia was quicker to apprehend the mutual benefits of trade than the Birmingham business man who went into politics. As soon as the machine-tool industry and timber trade in Britain succeeded in obtaining credits for the Soviet Union, a period of relative political calm between the two countries followed. Had the credit been a hundred million pounds instead of ten million pounds, we should have had an alliance with Russia before 1942. Does trade follow political understanding? Or does political understanding follow trade? It is certain that material interdependence quickens the will to political understanding; and political understanding, in turn, helps in organising mutual material benefits.

Russia and Britain are allies in the war. When the enemy is defeated, what use will Russia be to us? What use can we be to Russia? The lesson of the last twenty-five years is that peace between the nations depends on their service to each other. Autarky is the beginning of international anarchy. Will Russia become autarkic after the war? If an inept allied policy encourages the Soviet Union to economic self-sufficiency, the seed of another war will have been sown. The Soviet Union's needs as an importer and exporter are already different from what they were before the war. In future, it may well be an exporter of manufactured goods after the war; it will seek markets in China and Western Europe. Unless there is an ordered plan for world-trade, Britain, Russia and America may meet in commercial rivalry which the twenty-year Treaty will not prevent from becoming a political and, therefore, potentially, a military clash.

The moral of the Coateses' incomparable survey is that if capitalist Britain and Communist Russia are to live in peace, the two countries must now exercise themselves as to what benefits they can

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Faces in a Dusty Picture. By GERALD KERSH. *Heinemann.* 6s.

The Story of Dr. Wassel. By JAMES HILTON. *Macmillan.* 6s.

"Let's face it—John P. Marquand is the major American novelist writing to-day." Such is the lament (?) of the *Chicago Sun*. It is a serious admission, and the facing of it must be an unpleasant task for American critics. Yet need such a task really be undertaken? Is it really true that Marquand is superior to Hemingway, Dos Passos, Willa Cather, Steinbeck, Mary McCarthy, Farrel, Carson, McCullers . . . ? I believe not. I suffer from a strong prejudice against the American twentieth-century tradition, against the monumental and photographic school. But it would be absurd to recognise no distinctions between them. At his best Dos Passos has been very good indeed, certainly better than anything in Marquand's most recent book. Yet Marquand is excessively conscious of his bid for supremacy, and he does not hesitate to attack his rivals in the body of his novel. I should have thought this a bad move by any standard, quite apart from its indignity.

The book is immensely, almost overpoweringly, representative, a huge canvas worked over with unremitting thoroughness. Nothing is left unsaid, and very little is left said once; yet at the end one is haunted by an appalling question. Why? Why was the book written at all, and why at such length? What purpose has been served? Has our imagination been enriched, our emotion touched, our perception heightened? The foundation comes from the oppressive awareness of a serious purpose. In spite of its frequent dollops of humour, *So Little Time* is infused with a portentousness which makes one reluctant to accept its vacuity. Yet the only firm impression which remains at the end is that America was unwilling to be involved in war, but could, in the event, face the necessity with as high a courage as the *Chicago Sun* has faced Mr. Marquand's supremacy.

I far prefer an indifferent American work to an indifferent English one. At least there are scraps of new information to be picked up, which the equivalent English novel cannot provide. From this point of view Mr. Marquand's book can be mildly recommended. It is immensely informative on a somewhat trivial level, and sometimes on a level of more enduring interest. There is, for example, the admirable, mildly satirical portrait of Minot Roberts, clubman, broker and master of hounds. He is the Edward Leithen of New York, resembling an advertisement of fine old blended whisky. I suggest that he is a great deal nastier than his creator has fully understood, but it remains an interesting and valuable description. Yet with so many other characters Mr. Marquand reveals the besetting fault of his school, the inability to leave anything alone. There is the case of Walter Newcombe, famous foreign correspondent and author of *World Assignment*. The beginning is delicious, but it should have been sufficient. Instead, point after point is rammed repetitively home until one dreads every reappearance of a figure each time less credible than before. Or take the somewhat stark situation of the hero's *malaise* at his friend's exclusive club. Not only does he confuse the doorman by his introduction, but he becomes involved in a whole sequence of social blunders. How much more vivid had there been one slight *gaucherie* in which all his distress were concentrated.

Finally I would lodge a special protest against the following pedestrianism:

> A perfectly good word has been worked to death in the last few years—the adjective nostalgic. It has been applied to ladies' dresses, perfume, porch furniture, and even to saddle horses. Yet it is the only adjective to describe a certain wistful sort of feeling that a newspaper man has about the old shop and the old crowd. . . .

The problem of verbal selection is not to be solved in this self-conscious and heavy-footed way. Misuse of a word may have irrecoverably destroyed its value: in which case it should be rejected. But the apologetic preface does nothing whatever to make the word acceptable—indeed it deprives it of any value that remained.

The subject of the book? It is not really such a grave omission, for there is no quality here which can redeem the poverty of thought and ineffectiveness of manner. New York on the eve of war, interspersed with constant digressions into the hero's remote and recent past. These interspersions are extremely confusing and serve no purpose whatever. The avoidance of normal chronological narrative can be an impressive device in the hands of such thoughtful and intelligent novelists as Isherwood and Virginia Woolf. In this novel only irritation results.

The Devil in Crystal has an old and familiar theme, but one on which constant variations are possible. The hero wakes on the first page to find himself transported from 1943 to his own past life on a day in 1922. Once I had understood his predicament I read with unflagging interest, if also with a certain competitive irritation. It is a universal preoccupation, the temporal return, and everyone is probably something of a dogmatist. Mr. Marlow carries off his *tour de force* with great skill, and the situation he has chosen is an excellent one. Here the mind of the hero has remained in 1943, but his body is compelled to go through the precise motions of 1922. When this involves a compulsive flirtation and seduction, no longer in the least desired, the situation is very funny and very grim. An amusing book for train or queue, and the inevitable rather pretentious Dunnery can be taken lightly.

Mr. Kersh is something of a wonder. Unknown before the war, he has since written five complete novels and joined, one may reasonably suspect, the company of best-sellers. This last book, he informs us, was written in the months of July and August, 1943. Whatever one may think of this meteor, one can safely say that the rashness of the present blurb far exceeds the *Chicago Sun's* extravagance on Mr. Marquand's behalf. "Gerald Kersh has earned a place among the great story-tellers of the world." How can one, confronted by such a claim, keep one's hackles down. And surely it is fair to judge a book on its pretensions—that is the legitimate result of flying high. Suppose that the blurb had run on humbler lines.

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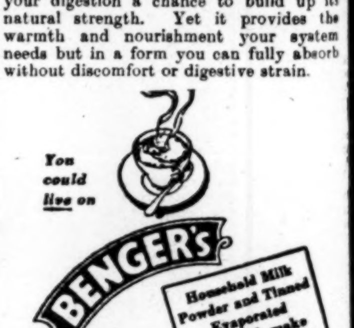

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“Gerald Kersh is in the tradition of the sentiental English adventure story, akin at his best Kipling's *Soldiers Three*. He is a popular iter with a genuine flair for narrative, a comtent use of words and a striking absence of e more blatant vulgarity usually associated with ch fiction. These books should be read as cile but imaginative narrative, not as serious eative art or as a constructive intellectual ntribution.”

Such modesty might not have earned an exrtation to go up higher, but at least it would ve allowed Mr. Kersh to remain in his legitiate place. But if we are to treat this clever venture-story of desert warfare as an important ork, we shall be overwhelmed by its superality. The method has been used before by is author. (a) Rapid assembly of characters,) Characters provided with distinguishing arks, (c) Characters bravely killed. How can e's emotions be seriously involved by such ppery!

If only because Mr. Hilton is quite unprentious in his claims, I was tempted to rank m higher than Gerald Kersh. Yet the judgent would probably be a wrong one. Mr. ilton writes in a far more modest and prosaic ay but if he avoids the extravagance of the her, he also avoids the touches of brilliance. he book is a kindly, rather sentimental account an American naval doctor's heroism in the acuation of Java. The fact that it is closely lated to actual events adds the genuine value informative reporting. PHILIP TOYNBEE

* * *

The price of *Ann Veronica* in the Everyman ibrary, given last week as 2*s*. 6*d*. should have en 3*s*. 0*d*.

Week-end Competitions

No. 737

et by William Whitebait

Rumour relates that a recent outbreak of practical king at Eton took a surrealist turn. One achieveent, apparently, was the silencing of the lower-school apel organ, the pipes of which fell about the heads unsuspecting masters; another was the transnting of two trees from the Provost's garden to the iddle of a playing field. Competitors are invited to lebrate one or both of these incidents in mock-heroic rse, with a limit of 20 lines. Solutions must reach e Editor by first post on Monday, March 27th.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 734

Set by G. W. Stonier

Competitors are invited to enrich mythology with a few modern tutelary deities. The description of each deity and his cult should not exceed 200 words.

Report by G. W. Stonier

Some charming pages have been culled from future anthropologists. The most common deity of the twentieth century seems to have been under various titles, the god of war: to him, as protector of hearth and home, humanity made sacrifice in huge holocausts of itself. Other tutelary deities were: Anti-Priapus, great god of sterility; Smugri, who “commanded the genuflections of a large part of the English race”; Sensofuma, another English deity, incarnate between 1918 and 1939; Ibis, god of bird-watchers; Osiren, protector from lightning and thunderbolts; and the twin household goddesses, Jive and Jitta. Among the more convincingly learned entries were those by R. J. P. Hewison, Trobriander, L. E. J., Marbrus, Little Billee, I. C. S., “Cactus” and C. F. B. Prizes to be equally divided between Leslie Johnson Allan M. Laing, and “Cactus.”

FROM A MANUAL OF MYTHOLOGY, A.D. 4944.

The worship of Emsisi flourished in England in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Besides being the peculiar and exclusive national deity, he was also the supreme moral lawgiver. The Graces, three legendary brothers borrowed, with a change of sex, from Greek mythology, were associated with him as subsidiary deities, the willow was sacred to him, and an Almanac of Wisdom seems to have been solemnly published each year in his honour. In a representation in metal recently unearthed in the St. John's Wood district of London, known to have been the locality of his principal shrine, he is portrayed as a venerable bearded figure with scythe and hour-glass.

His public worship, confined to the summer, was attended by extremely complicated rites, in which three upright sticks, betokening the Graces, or, as some hold, the persons of another contemporary religion, played a prominent part. Twenty-two white-robed initiates, with two oracles, were admitted into a roped circle which held the vulgar throng aloof. Auguries were first taken by casting a coin, and after a reverent pause the solemnities began. They usually lasted for three days, but at the least sign of rain or fading light, which were considered unpropitious, they ceased abruptly.

LESLIE JOHNSON

THE HOLY PLUNGERS

. . . And some Aquaticus as God do hail:
His naked form is glimpsed in running streams
Within whose icy waters he must daily plunge
As penance for an earthly life of grime;
But what the God endures as puuishment.
His sworn disciples revel in. Each morn
Ere Phoebus comes with flaming match to light
The fires of dawn, these devotees possessed
Dart with loud cries and musical beneath
The gelid shower, or cleave the frozen face
Of tub-enclosed waters, whence they leap,
Blue-nosed and shuddering, to gain the mat
And with a rough and hairy cloth restore
The half-stopped circulation. Then, O hark!
'Twixt lips all cyanosed and chattering teeth
Bursts forth in loud and ever louder strains
The God's glad morning hymn, that beats in waves
Discordant round the echoing walls.
'Tis said,

And all the world believes it to be true,
That they who practise this primeval cult
Are Englishmen, and mad. Despised by most,
They swift give scorn for scorn, professing high
Contempt for Sixth Day bathers, wiser men
Who shun the stream that gushes forth from C
For that steam-swirled and comfortable H.

ALLAN M. LAING

Boogiewallah, the god of the Dance Band Fans, resembles in appearance some of his ancestors, the gods of primitive African tribes. His nose is shaped like a saxophone, and with his five hands he beats incessantly on his large hollow stomach (he has no guts), clocking his brass-bound heels together at, but not in, the same time.

One of the rites of the cult involves mutilating the body of work created by musical composers. Some worshippers of Boogiewallah attend a regular place of worship, where one of the High Priests of the cult wields a vigorous drum-stick, while the lower orders perform their various offices, some known as crooners chanting their psalms in strange tones. Others worship in their homes, factories and canteens, where they are well catered for by the B.B.C. which supports the cult if Boogiewallah with missionary zeal employing several of its priests at high salaries, and even attempting at times to explain the mysticism behind the cult. The ardent followers of Boogiewallah can be seen during their acts of worship to enter into a trance, with glazing eyes, drumming heels, and vague murmurings. They have been known to dance.

“CACTUS”

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